The New REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion

VOL. LIII NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1928 NUMBER 687

Contents

The Week 281

Editorials

Governor Smith and the Progressives 284
Why a Federal Power Inquiry? 286

General Articles

Literary Politics ..... Edmund Wilson 289
Song (verse) ..... Louise Bogan 290
The Re-Discovery of America—V ..... Waldo Frank 291
Philosophy (verse) ..... Robert McBlair 293
Vanzetti's Last Statement ..... W. G. T. 294
Washington Notes ..... T. R. B. 296
Quiet Browns ..... Stark Young 297
The Company ..... Samuel Grafton 299

Correspondence 300

Reviews of Books

The Criticism of Darwin ..... Lewis Mumford 301
The Finest Ram, Sir ..... Llewelyn Powys 302
An Ex-Colored Man ..... E. H. W. 303
Humbert Wolfe ..... Malcolm Cowley 304
Recent Fiction ..... D. B. Woolsey 304

The Week

Mr. Bruce Bliven, writing from Havana, comments, in the four succeeding paragraphs, on the first week of the Pan-American Conference:

ONE week of the Pan-American Conference has served to make two things clear. There is no organized and serious opposition to the United States; and the representatives of that country have come determined to maintain, so far as they can, a markedly conciliatory spirit. At the moment of arrival, they announced that they were prepared to discuss any subject the Latins wished to take up, and to defend, on the basis of existing international law, all actions which the United States has taken in the past. After a short struggle within the ranks of the delegation between the practitioners of the old diplomacy and the new, the Americans agreed that all meetings, both of committees and of the conference as a whole, should be open to press and public, subject only to the not surprising reservation that any group could go into executive (secret) sessions if it desired to do so. This privilege, it is safe to say, will not be exercised except as a last resort. The head of the Salvadorean delegation, Dr. Gustavo Guerrero, came to the conference in a hostile mood, and gave several interviews to the press indicating his desire to challenge the Yankees; forthwith he was made chairman of the highly important committee on International Public Law, his nomination being seconded warmly by Chairman Charles Evans Hughes of the American delegation. Mr. Hughes was himself nominated for head of the committee on the Pan-American Union, and declined in favor of another Latin delegate, Dr. Olaya Herrera of Colombia. When the Haitians and Brazilians demanded that the proceedings be translated from Spanish into French and Portuguese, the Americans, with somewhat ostentatious amiability, stated that they did *not* desire them put into English.

THIS conciliatory spirit of the United States' delegation is, of course, sharply delimited. In not a single particular has any important policy been modified. The Americans are opposed to erecting the Pan-American Union into anything like a League of Nations for the Western Hemisphere. They are determined to maintain the right to intervene in any country where they feel it is desirable. They do not like the word "intervention"; they prefer to call it "interposition," on the theory that the United States never interferes in the internal affairs of any other country, and lands troops only when the lives and property of her nationals are threatened—an interpretation which, needless to say, would be rejected by most Latins and many Europeans and Americans. The United States' delegation is reluctant to see the codification of international law in the Western Hemisphere carried beyond such principles as are clearly capable of being deduced from past cases. And finally, it will evade committing itself on some questions, on the plea that in America they are properly the subject of state rather than federal action—a difference which does not exist for most of the Latin powers.

ATTENDING the conference, one is more than ever impressed by the fact that there is no unanimity of opinion or policy among the twenty Latin nations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

represented at Havana. In all of them, baiting the Yankees is a favorite amusement of politicians; but it seems most unlikely that they will, or can, unite on any definite program which would oppose the general economic policy of the United States. The differences, both as to temperament and as to economic and political interests, between the Central American countries and Argentina or Chile, are enormous, as enormous, say, as the differences between the Greeks and the Germans. The delegates themselves, naturally, will say nothing on so delicate a question as possible future alignments, but unofficial observers, including journalists of long experience in the chief South American nations, are strongly of the opinion that these will make no serious sacrifice on behalf of the rights of their tropical neighbors.

PRESIDENT Coolidge's visit to Havana, seen in retrospect, was decidedly useful to the Americans to emphasize the new attitude of conciliation. Most of the Cubans were apparently flattered that a President of the United States should visit their soil, and the warmth of their reception gave the conference an auspicious beginning from the American point of view. Yet, even in Cuba, it was found necessary to clamp down the lid tightly. President Machado, who rules Cuba with an iron-fisted efficiency which might cause Mussolini to roll an admiring eye westward, ordered the Havana press not to be critical of the Americans during the conference. A group of Haitians who sought to come to Cuba to present the anti-American point of view (not to be found in the hand-picked official delegation) were not permitted to land. A Communist weekly which published a number attacking "Yankee imperialism" was suppressed by the police. When the flags of the twenty-one countries were raised, with elaborate ceremonies, on the day of the second plenary session, the applause of the Cuban populace sounded loudest of all for Nicaragua, with Mexico second—and the United States third. Let who can interpret this riddle.

SENATOR Borah's intentions of staging a discussion of the Pan-American policy of the United States in the Senate should help in the slow but desirable, and in the end, unavoidable, definition of that policy. The executive branch of the government naturally wishes to avoid any but the broadest and most ambiguous definitions. The structure of Pan-Americanism, such as it is, has been built up chiefly by presidential acts or pronouncements, and both the President and the permanent officials of the State Department are opposed to any limitations of executive discretion. It is certainly time for Congress to inquire and discuss how far and in what way this exercise of presidential prerogative may be reduced to rule or may be checked by congressional action. The action which is taken under the prerogative seems to be usually dictated by certain permanent officials in the State Department, and these officials, it is becoming increasingly clear, sometimes get the government, as in Mexico and Nicaragua, into difficulties which many of their fellow countrymen believe to be both unnecessary and dangerous. There is no way of ordering them not to do it, for the prerogative of a president in the conduct of these matters is, and under the American Constitution almost has to be, pretty nearly royal, but Congress can discuss, propose and agitate even if it cannot forbid. That is what we hope it will do early and often in relation to the State Department's Pan-American policy.

ON another page of this issue the New Republic reprints from the February number of the Atlantic Monthly, through the courtesy of its management, an account by Mr. William G. Thompson of his last interview with Vanzetti on the afternoon of the day of the execution. We trust and believe that our readers will agree in characterizing it as one of the most illuminating and impressive documents in the record of the case. It stamps on a sensitive mind definitely and finally but in human relief the outlines of the moral personality both of Vanzetti and of his chief counsel. Those of us who knew Vanzetti believed him to be innocent for the same reason that Mr. Thompson did. But, of course, such a belief was not evidence, and there was no reason, except one based on personal confidence, why anyone who had not shared the experience of Vanzetti's personal dignity should share the conviction of his innocence. His execution was an abomination, not because those people who knew him best were convinced that he was not the kind of man who could perpetrate a common hold-up murder, but because so many impartial minds found sufficient reason in the record to question the fairness of his trial. Nevertheless, we repeat that the people who were most intimate with Vanzetti during the years of his imprisonment found his guilt incompatible with their knowledge of the man. The peculiar value of Mr. Thompson's diary of this interview is that it may give the open-minded reader some notion of the lawyer's elevation of character and mental integrity as well as those of the alleged culprit. If the two men who participated in this conversation were conspiring to defraud the state of Massachusetts of its right to take the life of a peculiarly vulgar murderer, they are two of the most consummate actors in the history of human crime and legal justice.

POSTPONEMENT of consideration of the new tax-reduction bill until after March 15, urged by the Treasury and decided upon by Congress, is a wise precaution. The reduction would have its greatest effect upon the revenues of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1929. The revenues of that year, even without tax reduction, will depend largely upon the incomes which have been earned in 1927. Estimates by the Treasury have assumed that the general level of prosperity and incomes would prove to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be as large in 1927 as in 1926. Yet there was certainly some falling off in profits during the latter part of last year; how much, we shall not know until the new income-tax returns are in. It may easily prove that the estimated surplus for the fiscal year 1928-29 will have to be revised downward when the facts of income are more definitely known. That would necessitate a more conservative tax reduction. Postponement of the bill, may, it is true, make impossible a retroactive cut. But since the most important part of the reduction is in the tax on corporate income, and since this income has already been earned and distributed—in so far as it is to be distributed—a retroactive cut would simply provide a bonus for the corporations which made a profit, and could be of little advantage to the general public.

THE prolonged discussion between the American State Department and the French Foreign Office about the Briand proposal to "outlaw" war between France and the United States has not resulted in an agreement, but it provoked a most illuminating debate about which the New Republic will have more to say later. The carrying on of the discussion in public, and the statement to which incidentally it gave rise, afford an indication of the earnestness and the reality of the present efforts, unsuccessful though for the moment they be, to limit the future availability of war as an instrument of national policy. This particular discussion cannot profitably be pursued very much further at present. Yet as a result of it France and the United States will probably be able to write a better arbitration treaty than they otherwise would have done. The two governments will, we trust, now concentrate on that task.

THE exiling of Trotsky and other prominent members of his faction indicates how far the whirligig of revolution has turned in Russia since October, 1917. Liberal prejudices condemn such harsh measures for political dissidence, and in one sense the punishment is a defeat for the first sign of liberal democracy which has thrust its head up in the Soviet dictatorship. But in order to understand the issues at stake, we must remember that the suppressed faction was, in all other respects than its demand for free speech, more intransigent and doctrinaire than the dominant powers. It wanted to interfere with the progress of agricultural life in Russia by stirring up a class conflict between the poor peasants and the "rich" ones —who are rich only to the extent of having two or four horses instead of one. In general, it wanted to sacrifice the interests of the peasants for the sake of industry, in order to build up more rapidly an industrial proletariat, which it dogmatically conceived to be the only firm basis for a proletarian communism. It wanted more aggressive measures in promoting revolution abroad, on the theory that a communist Russia could come to being only in a communist world. In short, it put the interests of theoretical revolutionary internationalism above the practical and immediate interests of Russia. If the exile means a strengthening of the political dictatorship, it also means a strengthening of the economic drift away from revolutionary dogmas.

VARIOUS interests concerned in shipping are trying to hammer out their differences in Washington, so that legislation may be obtained from this Congress. There are the established private-shipping men, who have suffered ever since the War from a surplus of tonnage, and want the government out of the business entirely because of its competition. There are the ship-building interests and those promoting new ventures, who want measures such as large government loans at low interest, and some form of subsidy, to stimulate ship building and make increased American operation profitable. There are exporters and importers, who want established trade routes maintained even though they are not profitable to the ship-owner, and hence favor continued government operation at a loss, at least of some lines. There are the naval interests, who believe an American merchant marine necessary for defense, and who want a large merchant marine to protect, so that they can have more warships. Is there any assurance that the balance of these forces will serve the national interest? We doubt it. Aside from considerations of defense, there is a good deal to be said for the proposition that prosperity in this country will best be served by the carriage of our foreign trade in vessels that are operated efficiently enough to pay their own way, no matter what flag they carry. If we are to abolish *laissez-faire* in shipping, we ought to make a thorough job of it, and subsidize in the interest of an integrated national economy, rather than in the interest of some group of private traders or ship builders.

SENATOR La Follette's proposal to limit the use of Federal Reserve credit for stock speculation, on the ground that this use withdraws credit from industry and trade, seems to us to be based on an insufficient understanding of the operations of the banking system. The Federal Reserve Banks, in their chief regulatory activities, of fixing rediscount rates and dealing in securities in the open market, do not discriminate between different kinds of loans or divert credit from one use to another. If by their action credit is tightened, it is tightened in every direction. Because of the recent ease of credit, a large amount has recently become available, and has been used, for stock speculation. But credit has been easy for other purposes as well; it has not been used to so great an extent in business, because it has not been needed; business has not followed Wall Street into an orgy of speculative activities. It is true that different rates are charged for different kinds of loans, and that member banks discriminate among borrowers according to their judgment of the security offered. It is true that agricultural credit, as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

administered under the Federal Farm Loan Board, has not been easy. But these matters are independent of the Federal Reserve Banks' influence on the total volume of credit. Such discriminations would continue to exist whether rediscount rates were low or high; if they are indefensible, the remedy lies elsewhere than in a measure aimed at the general control of credit.

NOW that the City Housing Corporation has successfully completed its experiment of good housing with plenty of open space at low prices, at Sunnyside in the Borough of Queens, it announces a much more ambitious project. A complete town, for a population of 25,000 or more, will be created less than twenty miles from New York, on what is now farm and pasture land in New Jersey, between Passaic and Paterson. This will be designed, not as a mere dormitory from which people will stream into the overcrowded city and back again every day, but largely as a self-contained community with its own industries, where most of the inhabitants will work. Planning the town as a unit offers great possibilities both in better living conditions and reduced costs. Earlier model cities have been planned without sufficient consideration of the traffic problems created by the automobile. In Radburn, as the new town will be called, no house will front on a through street; the children and adults will all have easy access to schools, parks and community facilities without crossing a highway. Proper planning will reduce costs of paving, sewers, water and gas mains, while large-scale construction will permit other important economies. Although houses of high quality will be built for a wide variety of income classes, all will be cheaper than in the ordinary development. Good one-family houses will be sold for less than $8,500. The only profit to the corporation will be enough to pay the usual 6 percent on its limited-dividend stock, plus a sufficient surplus for safety. To build good housing as part of the metropolis was an important contribution, but to aid decentralization by taking people out of the city will be a more fundamental step toward solving the problem.

SENATOR Shipstead has, with the backing of labor, introduced a new form of anti-injunction bill into Congress. Previous bills have provided simply that injunctions could not be issued against unions in labor disputes. This one is based on the fact that the formal legal purpose of the injunction is usually to prevent irreparable damage to property or property rights. Courts have construed property rights to include the right of an employer to carry on his business, and have frequently ruled that a strike was an unjustifiable interference with this right. The new bill defines property which may be protected by the injunctive process as tangible property only. A court could, under it, enjoin a union from acts of violence to person or plant, but could not forbid it from carrying on a strike merely because it interfered with the employer's business. Our judgment is that such a measure, if it were not held unconstitutional, would have little practical effect. Judges who issue anti-labor injunctions will construe the law as they please, and skillful employers' attorneys will find loopholes in almost any legislation. Furthermore, this law would not touch the most recent and serious development of the injunction—the forbidding of a strike because, according to the court, it interferes with interstate commerce. The main fight against the anti-labor injunction will have to be carried on by the education of the public and the courts concerning its social and economic injustice, as well as by the resistance of organized labor on the field of conflict.

THE Senate has again, and for the fourth time, adopted the Norris resolution. This measure would authorize a constitutional amendment whereby "lame duck" Congresses would be abolished. Under this scheme, the Congress elected in November would begin its labors on the second of the following January. The President would be inaugurated on January 15. No good argument has ever been advanced against this proposal; yet it has never been allowed to reach a vote in the House. Politicians who expect some day to be "lame ducks" themselves disregard the best interests of the country in the interest of their own class. It remains to be seen whether they will be brazen enough to repeat the process.

Governor Smith and the Progressives

THE editors of the Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers have decided, if they have to choose between Hoover and Smith as candidates for the presidency, to support Hoover, and if they have to choose between Smith and Dawes or Lowden, to support Smith. The announcement affords a significant clue to the drift of progressive opinion in relation to the presidential election. The Scripps-Howard chain is the only group of newspapers with a wide distribution throughout the United States which has any title to be called progressive. In 1924 it gave a mild and flickering approval to the candidacy of the late Senator La Follette. Its constituency is more Republican than Democratic, but it is on the whole more progressive than either. Its Republican bias has not prevented it on occasion from supporting Democratic candidates. At present it provides the only indication of the present opinions of the 5,000,000 American citizens who voted for La Follette; and the endorsement which its editors have extended to Mr. Hoover, if he were opposed to Governor Smith, would, so far as we can see, add enough votes to Mr. Hoover's support to insure his victory. For this reason the news will, we hope, prod Governor Smith and his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

managers into a reconsideration of his policy. The significance of the decision for them is both obvious and disagreeable. As the result of their past management of his campaign, the larger part of the progressive vote, which is necessary to his election, will, unless he happens to be opposed by a positively reactionary candidate like Dawes, pass to his Republican opponent.

Governor Smith and his General Staff seem determined at present at any cost to play it safe. They are, apparently, assuming that they can transfer the strategy which he has used so successfully in New York, without any loss of efficacy, to the battlefield of national politics. In New York his success has been a *tour de force* of personality, supplemented by a gift for political combat, a complete knowledge of state business, a sound program of state administrative improvement, an early and popular stand upon the issue of prohibition and a thorough mastery of state partisan politics. He has fought a personal battle with his Republican opponents, in which partisan principles and partisan issues counted very little. He borrowed most of his proposals from Republican sources and carried them out, sword in hand, with Republican assistance, and at the same time in spite of Republican opposition. He has had no reason to question the principles on which the Republicans are conducting government in its relation to business. Like them, he has assumed that the existing distribution of economic and political power and the existing relation between politics and industry are essentially sound. Prohibition and water power apart, he has accepted the existing structure of Republican rule and concentrated on the attempt to make a certain part of it, viz., the administration of state government, work more efficiently. If he were obliged to speak in public in the near future on his pretensions to the presidency, his speech would necessarily boil down into a personal plea: "Please vote for ME. I have stolen the Republicans' thunder in New York State and beaten them at their own game. Trust me as a man. The better you know me, the more you will like me."

In a presidential campaign he will not get very far by playing down partisan issues in this way and playing up his personality. The attempt to steal Republican thunder did not, in the eyes of the American people, prove to be a sufficient reason for electing the Democrat John Davis President of the United States. If they continue to call for Republican thunder, they will prefer in national politics to take it from a Republican. Why should they elect a Democrat until the Democrats open up the jaws of some forbidding clouds and utter some thunder of their own? The Democrats have, since Wilson's death, been impotent to manufacture national political policies, and Governor Smith is, in this respect, an immaculate Democrat. In his only utterance as a presidential candidate, he suggested to the Democratic National Committee the early consideration on their part of a platform. Yet he must know that the leaders of his party are quite incapable at present of writing a platform which would formulate a positive fighting alternative to Republicanism. The source from which such a platform must come is from the presidential candidate himself, and he would then have to impose it upon his party, as Woodrow Wilson did in 1912-13. Governor Smith also suggested that in formulating the new platform the Committee should embody in its articles Jeffersonian Democratic principles, but if this is the best he can do, he may follow his party to defeat, but he will never lead it to any other result. In his policy of state political reorganization he has never acted on the Jeffersonian principle that the best government is the one which governs least. His own work has, in this respect, pursued Hamiltonian rather than Jeffersonian precedents, and, if he were to adopt a similarly realistic attitude toward national political and economic problems, he would continue to be no less Hamiltonian. It is with respect to prohibition alone that the resurrection of Jeffersonian democracy might prove to be of some help to contemporary national policy.

There is only one way in which Governor Smith or any other Democratic leader can sharply and effectively challenge Republican rule. He will have to question the practically complete subordination which has prevailed during two Republican administrations of public policy to business and particularly to industrial interests. Until a party comes into existence which is capable of reviving the progressive attempt to emancipate government from its almost exclusive allegiance to business and to use it as a means of correlating business with the activities and the interests of other social classes—until that time comes, the voters of this country will have no reason to turn the Republicans out. If they are satisfied with things as they are and merely wish to have certain technical improvements introduced into existing practice, they would have every reason to prefer Hoover to Smith. Hoover is an expert in better business administration. Smith is only an expert in state government, which is an important but inferior activity. As long as Governor Smith and the Democrats are unwilling to question the major principle of Republican rule, they will remain its accomplice rather than a positive alternative to it.

There are, of course, obvious and persuasive reasons why Governor Smith should hesitate to issue another challenge to the political power which the business interests of the United States now exercise through the Republican party. Progressivism in that sense is apparently suffering from an even severer blight than Democracy as a challenge to Republicanism. Progressives may agree in repudiating the present subordination of public policy to business, but they are hopelessly divided among themselves about their analyses of the evil and the most effective way to correct it. The old progres-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sivism of Bryan, Roosevelt, La Follette, and Wilson was moral in its motivation. It originated during a period of muckraking in which the propagandists of progressivism denounced wealth as predatory, and envisaged the needed saviors of the American democracy as glorified policemen and district attorneys. It would be worse than useless for Governor Smith to revive an agitation of this kind. Since 1912, the political and economic scene has assumed a new appearance. American industry has itself become, after a fashion, progressive. It has undertaken a work of technical improvement which, if continued, offers to the American economic system an opportunity of sufficient productive efficiency to do away with the waste and the suffering of poverty. Any government which sought to assist in ameliorating the lives of its citizens would, instead of suspecting, fearing, abusing and dictating to industry, be obliged to understand its processes and recognize its needs. The chief task of a progressive government would be an attempt to distinguish progressive industry and to find a way of being its counsellor and friend. If progressivism is ever to come back in American politics, its leaders will have to recognize that their own most cherished purposes are dependent upon the increasing success of business in improving its processes.

Governor Smith, can, however, challenge the Republican subordination of government to business without reviving either the intolerant and suspicious spirit or the censorious program of the older progressivism. Notwithstanding the increasing productive efficiency of American business, it is obviously open to criticism in certain essential respects, from the point of view of its alleged purpose. Its prices favor industry at the expense of agriculture. Its management is more successful in producing economic goods than in providing for their sufficient consumption, and the cost of selling them is, consequently, excessive. Important industries such as coal and cotton goods are disorganized, and their managements seem incapable of restoring them to health. Trade associations and trusts exercise a considerable control over prices without being subject to any sufficient inspection in the interest of a socialized and coördinated economy. In these and many other ways industry is socially inefficient, and, if left to its own devices, seems incapable of putting its own house in order. Most of the faults for which it is now being criticized are in part the direct or indirect result of its very increase in productive efficiency. Others are the result of causes which the management of private business cannot control. Industry, in order to reach its maximum social efficiency, needs the help of government, but the part which government should play is that of an independent and candid friend rather than that of an obsequious accomplice. Without state pressure and correction, private business will lack the will and the ability to rationalize its own activities—that is, to harmonize them with competing or supplementary activities and with the best contemporary vision of human welfare.

In spite, consequently, of the failure and the present unpopularity of the old progressivism, it was fully justified in envisaging the progressive cause as essentially the attempt to emancipate the politics and government of the country from plutocratic control. The Republican remedy for the excessive interference of government with business is the abject subordination of politics and government to business. No warfare against Republican rule can gain any vitality until it is led by statesmen who will headline this issue. At best Governor Smith has not much chance of being elected, but his only chance is to ask throughout the campaign whether the American people are satisfied with a government which is complacently and officiously plutocratic. We are very much afraid that he will not ask the question. It would be better for him not to ask it unless he has some conviction of its reality and importance, and there is no indication at present that he has any such conviction. He is not by temperament, experience and education an agitator or a man of aggressive protestant ideas. As a Catholic and a loyal Tammanyite, he is accustomed to taking principles for granted and to interesting himself in their more or less ambiguous administration. The primrose path for him will be to declare his allegiance to Jeffersonian principles, his abhorrence of federal centralization and his faith in some variation of what Mr. Wilson used to call the "New Freedom." He will depend for his election on personal magic. The progressives will, in that event, have no sufficient reason to prefer him to Herbert Hoover. If the Republican system is to be indefinitely perpetuated without any explicit protest, it is far better to keep a healthy Republican rather than an obsolete Democrat responsible for it. Mr. Hoover, as the representative of American business, would have as much will and more power to deal remedially with a few of the superficial evils of contemporary American capitalism than would an outsider like Al Smith.

Why a Federal Power Inquiry?

MOST of the able advocates whom the electric-power industry has engaged to oppose Senator Walsh's resolution for an investigation into its practices adopt an argument which by this time has a familiar sound. Regulation, they say, is exclusively the province of the several states; Congress would be exceeding its prerogatives by passing any laws which might result from an investigation. Or, by way of variation, there is nothing amiss in the industry calling for inquiry, because state regulation has it in hand.

Is this true? Hardly. Even if no more were known about the situation, the existence of a large and heavily financed power lobby in Washington,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the multifarious propaganda and political pressures which the power interests are exerting against such federal projects as Muscle Shoals and Boulder Dam, the political contributions by utility magnates like that by Samuel Insull, on account of which Mr. Smith of Illinois has just been debarred from the Senate—such things show that the scope of the power interests is not confined to the states, that, for some reason of moment, the power industry and the federal government have contacts. The very existence of the highly profitable and immensely powerful aggregations of capital represented by the electric-utility holding companies, whose operations are national in scope, furnishes enough reason why the Senate is justified in inquiring into their activities and methods, in order to see whether any federal regulation is necessary.

More than this, too, is known. Professor William Z. Ripley's "Main Street and Wall Street" is not forgotten. Other investigators have turned up other facts. There are numerous instances of holding companies, pyramided one on another as many as five-fold, controlling utilities in many states. The concentration of control has grown to such an extent that not more than a dozen interests now govern the bulk of the electric production in the nation. There is no federal regulation of the security issues, the financial and other practices of these companies; and many of their activities are both beyond the ken and beyond the legal power of the state commissions. And there are abuses in these activities. Let us recount a few.

A holding company purchases a controlling interest in a local, operating utility. To pay for all, or nearly all, of its purchase, it sells bonds and preferred stock, which have a limited return. The holding-company interests receive issues of common stock, representing little or no cash investment, which carries the control. If the net return of the company is larger than is necessary to pay the interest and dividends on the bonds and preferred stock—as it usually is—the extra earnings go to the holders of the common. Since the amount of the common stock is comparatively small in relation to the other issues, such extra earnings may, and often do, provide an extremely high rate of dividends. *Per contra,* if the earnings should fall to a point where they could pay little more than the bond interest and preferred dividends, the return on the holding company's common stock would be drastically reduced. The common stock of the holding company is like an extremely sensitive instrument, registering by marked changes even slight variations in the percentage of the basic earnings to the total investment. When a second holding company assumes the same relation to the first one which the first one has to the operating company, this sensitivity is increased. When holding companies are built one upon another to the extent of five layers or more, you have an anomalous situation—the utility, which is supposed to offer a relatively safe but limited return on real investment, and which, for reasons of public policy, is supposed to be a non-speculative undertaking, is actually controlled by the ownership of stock (representing no cash investment) which offers immense possibilities of gain or loss, is extremely sensitive to widespread changes in utility earnings, and is thus highly speculative. It is of interest in this connection that, during the recent boom years on the stock exchange, the shares of utility holding-companies have, as a whole, shown greater advances than even the most speculative industrial groups. Is not this an unhealthy situation which may require some regulation of holding-company security issues, such as we have in the case of railroads?

There is little competition among operating companies—each holds a monopoly of a given territory. Such allocation of territory proceeds to larger areas as the holding-company extension continues. Competition thus offers no protection to the consumer. But competition does exist in another respect, which is detrimental to the consumer. The purchase and refinancing of operating companies is so profitable that active bidding for them frequently occurs, and they are sold at exorbitantly high prices. These prices do not daunt the holding-company promoter, because he can always raise the necessary money by security issues. And they often become established as part of the "value" of the plant, on which the rates charged the consumer must furnish a "fair return." Thus the promoter indulges in rash competitive speculation, and the consumer is required, under legal sanction, to foot the bill. In this respect the "regulated" public utility has an advantage over non-regulated private industry. But if the inflated value should not be recognized as part of the rate base, the security structure of the industry would suffer, and the consumers would suffer as a result of that.

Holding companies usually derive income from operating companies in other ways than by ownership. They make charges upon them for "management," "services," and the like. These charges are added to the expense of the operating company, before profit is reckoned. State commissions have no right to regulate these charges, unless collusion can be shown. In some cases these contracts for service may be reasonable; the operating company may be receiving fair value. But sometimes they are not reasonable, and the state commission has no discretion, and frequently no knowledge, in the matter. It was discovered, for instance, in 1926, that for four years the Southern Indiana Gas and Electric Company had had a contract with its holding company, the Commonwealth Power Company of New York, giving the latter both a certain percentage of the cost of all additions to the property and a certain percentage of its gross earnings. By this means the management charges of the holding company were first added to the investment account, on which the consumer must pay a fair re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turn, and then used to increase the gross return, a percentage of which the holding company receives. The consumer paid twice for the same thing.

We should also note that out of such unregulated management charges come immense sums spent for fighting the cause of the utilities in rate cases before commissions and courts, for lobbying in state capitols and in Washington, for general propaganda. The consumer pays for the ammunition of his opponent.

There sometimes come to light cases where the holding-company managements, which have little or no cash invested in the utility, cause contracts to be made with other companies—such as supply and equipment companies—in which they are interested, to the detriment of the utility.

To illustrate another abuse, we quote from a forthcoming book, "Power Control," by H. S. Raushenbush, to be published shortly by the New Republic:

> In October, 1926, the Railroad and Public Utilities Commission of Tennessee disapproved, as an item of valuation, of the payment by the Eastern Tennessee Electric Company of a percentage of the cost of improvements to a construction company organized at the expense of the utility company and controlled by the same stock-holding interests. *This latter company, the commission found, assumed no risk, furnished no service and paid for no material for which it was not reimbursed by the electric company except as regards the salaries of its general officers who were, with one exception, officers of the utility.*

This case happened to fall within the knowledge and power of the state commission, but if a holding company had been involved, it might easily have escaped correction.

Another point at which the power combinations escape regulation is in the wholesaling of current from a company in one state to a company in another. State officials have no legal authority over the price paid for such current. It becomes a part of the allowed expenses for the purchasing company. If the two companies were independent of each other, the bargaining process might perhaps be trusted to achieve a fair result, but often they are merely two hands of the same body, both having the same interest in the profits of either, profits made by charging high rates to the public. It is contended that such interstate wholesaling forms but a small part of the total current used. But it is rapidly growing in importance, as widespread interconnection proceeds.

We omit here any discussion of the impotence of most state commissions to prevent the large gains to the utility owners through valuations much higher than the amounts actually invested. The utilities mobilize their large resources nationally for expensive valuation proceedings, while the consumers are protected only state by state, through inadequately paid and understaffed commissions.

Are these matters of great importance to the individual consumer? The general defense is set up that rates for electricity are low. This defense seems to be largely effective with the consumer, because he uses so little current, and because rates have fallen since pre-war days. He does not know that rates have not fallen nearly so much as the improved technique of the industry would have permitted. He does not know that his rates are high in comparison with the rates in effective publicly owned systems such as that in Ontario; that they are unduly high in relation to rates charged industrial consumers. He does not realize that, if it were not for the indefensible profits of the holding-company promoters, he might be using current freely for cooking, and perhaps for heating as well. Here is an example of great advance in engineering technique which is not being passed on to the public, in the same sense that engineering advance has benefited the public in, for example, the automobile industry.

To support the desirability of a federal inquiry it is not necessary to assume at the beginning that federal regulation is the one and only way out. Such an inquiry might help tremendously merely in bringing to light a demand for better state regulation, and in pointing out ways to effectuate it. It might strengthen, for instance, the movement begun in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania to base regulation on contracts between the state and the utility, rather than on the uncertain and limited police power. Where state commissions now lack legal power to deal with abuses, the federal government might call in their aid, rather than assume the regulatory burden itself. Ingenious proposals of this sort have been made, depending, of course, on appropriate federal legislation. There is no occasion, in this question, to raise the old issue of states' rights, or the new one of centralization versus decentralization. It is a case where coöperation between the states and the federal government is obviously necessary. Congress now has few more important duties than to inquire how the federal government may best coöperate.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AND COPYRIGHT, 1928, IN THE U. S., BY THE NEW REPUBLIC, INC., 421 WEST 21ST STREET, NEW YORK
HERBERT CROLY, PRESIDENT, DANIEL MEBANE, TREASURER

EDITORS

HERBERT CROLY BRUCE BLIVEN GEORGE SOULE
EDMUND WILSON STARK YOUNG R. M. LOVETT

ASSISTANT EDITOR: T. S. MATTHEWS

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

JANE ADDAMS JOHN DEWEY WALDO FRANK
ALVIN JOHNSON E. C. LINDEMAN ROBERT LITTELL
LEWIS MUMFORD GILBERT SELDES LEO WOLMAN
ELINOR WYLIE

RATES: SINGLE COPIES, FIFTEEN CENTS; YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, FIVE DOLLARS; CANADIAN, FIVE DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS; FOREIGN, SIX DOLLARS; THREE MONTHS' TRIAL, ONE DOLLAR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Literary Politics

IN writing about Valéry and France several weeks ago, I quoted Valéry's description of the literary situation in Paris as he found it in his youth. There were, he says, a number of different parties, each with its own definite set of policies and each with an eminent writer, or group of eminent writers, at its head. There were Zola and the naturalists; Leconte de Lisle and the Parnassians; Renan and Taine and the *"idéologues"*; Mallarmé and the symbolists. These parties stated their programs and defended them against each other: they played roles in a literary politics equally exciting and equally important with politics of the other sort. When five of Zola's followers seceded from his party over the publication of "La Terre," the event was profoundly significant: it was the first attack in a great literary campaign. When Valéry, received by the Academy, reasserts the claims of symbolism, once a literary minority, in a speech on the career of his predecessor, one of the leaders of a different camp —that is, again, an historic event and marks the success of a revolution. The French writers whom we read most today—France, Gourmont, Proust, Valéry, Gide—all came to intellectual maturity in this atmosphere of debate; and it is this which gives them a kind of interest—the interest of the intelligence fully awakened to the implications of what the artist is doing, that is to say, to his responsibility —very rare in the literature of English-speaking countries, and perhaps nowadays nowhere to be found to any very intense degree save, on a smaller scale, in Dublin. For there is one language which all French writers, no matter how divergent their aims, possess in common: the language of criticism.

When we come to survey the literary landscape of contemporary America, it seems to us at first that nothing could resemble less the clear political alignment which is nearly always to be found in France. Then, as we examine the prospect more closely, we are surprised to become aware of the presence both of able leaders and of powerful parties, each professing more or less explicitly a special point of view and acting more or less consistently on a set of principles. There is, in the first place, H. L. Mencken, with his satellite Nathan, his disciple Sinclair Lewis, and his literary nursery, The Mercury. Then there is T. S. Eliot, who, despite the fact that he lives in England and has recently become a British citizen, exerts a tremendous influence in America and is always regarded by his American readers as an American writer. It may be said that Mencken and Eliot between them rule the students of the eastern universities: when the college magazines do not sound like The Mercury, they sound like The Criterion. Then there is the class—it has not the unity of a group and is almost entirely without critical self-consciousness—of what may be called the neo-romantics—of which Edna Millay and Scott Fitzgerald, with their respective followers, are the leaders in the present generation, and of which such writers as Sara Teasdale, Hergesheimer and perhaps also Cabell were the precursors. Then there is the admirably unified and self-conscious group of the social revolutionary writers: Dos Passos, Lawson, Michael Gold, etc. Their instruments are The New Masses and the Playwrights' Theater. One should mention also—though they constitute a school rather than a group—the psychologico-sociological critics: Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford (whom I take to be a disciple of Brooks), Joseph Wood Krutch, and a great many others.

What we lack, then, in America is not writers or even literary parties, but simply literary criticism (the school of critics I have mentioned above, though they set forth their own ideas, do not occupy themselves much with the ideas or the art of the writers with whom they deal). Each of these groups writes a certain amount of criticism to justify or explain what it is doing, but it may, I believe, in general be said that they do not communicate with each other: their opinions do not really circulate. It is astonishing to observe, in America, despite our floods of literary journalism, to what extent the literary atmosphere is a non-conductor of criticism. What actually happens, in American literature, is that each leader or group of leaders is allowed to intimidate his disciples, either ignoring all the other leaders or taking cognizance of their existence only by remote and contemptuous sneers. Mencken and Eliot are, as I have said, from the point of view of their influence as critics, the most formidable American writers of their time; yet Mencken's discussion of his principal rival has, so far as I have observed, been confined to a scornful inclusion of the latter's works among the items of one of those lists of idiotic crazes in which the editor of The Mercury usually includes also the recall of judges and paper-bag cookery. And Eliot, safe in London, does not, of course, consider himself under the necessity of attempting to deal with Mencken at all. Similarly, Nathan scoffs at Lawson and has never been willing seriously to discuss the movement which he represents; and The New Masses has been content with an occasional gibe at Mencken. Van Wyck Brooks, in spite of considerable baiting, has never been induced to defend his position (though Krutch has recently taken up some challenges). And the poor romantics have submitted to hard blows from several different camps without the slightest attempt to strike back. Furthermore, it seems unfortunate that some of the most important writers in the country—Sherwood Anderson and O'Neill, for example

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—should work, as they apparently do, in almost complete intellectual isolation, receiving, from the outside, but little intelligent criticism and secreting, in their solitary labors, but little for themselves.

Now, it is no doubt impossible for an English-speaking country to hope for a literary criticism comparable to that of the French: like cookery, it is one of their specialties. But when one considers the number of literary reviews, the immense quantity of literary journalism, now published in New York, one wonders how it has become possible for our reviewing to remain so puerile. Histories are commonly reviewed by historians, and books on physics by physicists; but when a new book of American poetry or a novel or other work of belles lettres appears, one gets the impression that it is given simply to any well intentioned (and not even necessarily literate) person who happens to be fond of books; and this reviewer then describes to his readers his emotions upon reading the book. How many works of general literature are ever officially discussed in New York by persons with any special knowledge of the subjects on which they are invited to write? Since the death of Stuart Sherman, who was second-rate at best, there has not been a single American critic who occupied himself habitually and in any authoritative way with contemporary literature. Yet what might have been the effect on Sinclair Lewis and on the great army of Mencken's younger followers, if Mencken had ever been systematically and periodically overhauled by a critic of equal vigor? What would have been the effect on all the young poets who have been made prematurely old by the attempt to imitate Eliot's "Gerontion," if a critic as intelligent as the people who ridiculed "The Waste Land" were stupid had, while applauding and appreciating Eliot, made fun of him in time? Do not the apostles of proletarian literature deserve the polemics which their evident appetite for controversy invites? And might not a critic who enjoyed Lawson's wit and valued his technical inventions have accomplished something in the direction of curing him of his bad rhetoric and his bathos? Furthermore, those scattered romantics who, after the War, repeated in America all the poses, the gestures, the philosophy and the methods of the Europe of 1830—instead of finding themselves stalled, bewildered, out of date almost as soon as they became famous, if their situation had in time a little been cleared up for them by a competent criticism, might they not already have readjusted themselves and applied their brilliant abilities to the production of something durable? Finally, with the advent of a new generation, there has emerged from our literature of the past a number of important names, a number of writers whom we are all agreed in regarding as remarkable: Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, Poe, Stephen Crane, Henry James. Yet the studies by American hands which have so far dealt with these American classics have been almost exclusively biographical. We have been eager to expose their weaknesses and to detect their complexes, but quite without intelligent ideas as to why we should think them worth preserving. Have we not been unfortunate in the lack of a criticism which should have undertaken, for example, to show how Hawthorne, Melville and Poe, besides becoming excessively eccentric persons, anticipated, in the middle of the last century, the peculiar temperament of our own day and invented methods for rendering it?

I do not mean, of course, to assert that, except among the very smallest, criticism of this kind can make or unmake artists. A work of art is not a technique or a set of ideas, or even a combination of both. But I am strongly disposed to believe that our literature would benefit by a genuine literary criticism which should deal expertly with art and ideas, not merely inform us whether the reviewer "let out a whoop" for the book or threw it out the window. Yet there is a sense in which there can be no such thing as a literary critic—that is, a writer who is at once first-rate and nothing but a literary critic: there are writers of poetry, drama or fiction, who also write criticism, like most of the French writers mentioned above and like Coleridge, Dryden, Poe or Henry James; and there are historians like Renan, Taine, Sainte-Beuve, Leslie Stephen, Brandes, or Strachey, whose literary criticism is a part of their history. In America, neither kind of criticism has been very highly developed; and I fear that we must take this as a sign of the rudimentary condition of our literature in general. The poets, the dramatists and the novelists lack the learning and the cultivated intelligence to give us the benefit of their experience; and it may in general be said that precisely where our historians and biographers fail is in their inability to deal with works of literature.

EDMUND WILSON.

Song

Come, break with time,
You who were lorded
By a clock's chime
So ill-afforded.
If time is allayed,
Be not afraid.

I shall break, if I will.
Break, since you must.
Time has its fill,
Sated with dust.
Long the clock's hand
Burned like a brand.

Take the rock's speed
And earth's heavy measure.
Let buried seed
Drain out time's pleasure,
Hear time's decrees.
Come, cruel ease.

LOUISE BOGAN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Re-Discovery of America

V: *Action as Knowing*

With this article, Mr. Frank completes his approach to the American Scene. He has set forth that there was one great Western Culture. Its sources were the ancient worlds that lived on the Mediterranean shores. In Christian Medieval Europe it reached the climax of an organic Whole. The creating of Wholes from human experience is the basic human need. Science, art and religion express this need and this sense of the Whole in an ascending series. The ultimate structure—religion—cannot survive when the substructures—sciences and arts—give way. This explains the break of the Christian synthesis and the activity of modern science. The symbol of Western culture is the Mediterranean; the symbol of its dissolution is the Atlantic. The voyage of Columbus best expresses the outgoing of energy into invention and discovery, which marked the death of the cultural Body of Europe. Action as a value is a modern trait; and its first cause and work was the disintegration of Europe. The chief embodiment of action is the machine. With it goes the modern emphasis on the personal will. The story told by modern genius is that of the destruction of the cultural Whole in which Europe dwelt. Science and poetry broke down the Synthesis by deflecting creative energy and undermining values; the great prose men from Cervantes to Joyce and Proust made records of the chaos.—THE EDITORS.

AN admirable modern, Mr. Gorham Munson, perplexed by the exploded dogma of the ages and, courting the chances for a young American of real knowledge, once found himself asking:

> Under the circumstances, would it not be useful to try to find out the facts? To discover some means of verification that would enable us to distinguish between the invention of "knowledge" and the discovery of knowledge? Are there no valid criteria—only attitudes, beliefs and speculations? . . .

His question, old as intelligence and young as every human mind, confronts each epoch. For ours, which marks a turning more acute than any since the Mediterranean world was bound together, it is crucial. Looking back for light to answer it, we learn the scant originality of human thought. Practically all of man's responses to the question: What is Knowledge? are of one family. And the warfare between "truths" has been so ruthless, because it was a struggle between brothers.

With various accent, this family of Knowledge says:

"You want to know the Truth? Well, here it is. Not there. Here! God . . . or gods . . . or oracles . . . or reason, have provided it. Come and get it. Take it. Learn it. And be saved. Leave it and be damned."

Of this family is the Knowledge of the revealed religions, and of the cults which piece together shards of these religions. Even the creeds that reject revelation "know" in the same way. The Buddhism of Gotama is an instance. Positive Knowledge, it holds, is needless for salvation: the findings of sense are false since they are held within the lying Wheel of Time and Space. The secret is to get outside the trammels of causation; the way is specified—the seven-fold Path, the Goal is named—Nirvana. Stoicism, also: giving value only to behavior of a certain kind, it reveals its *a priori* intellectual Knowledge. And the credo (now subsiding) of modern science. The successors of Bacon and Descartes inherited intact the kind of Knowledge of the schoolmen. In lieu of a Myth, they had faith that reason could yield up, from revelation of the senses, the precise full Universe. The popular Knowledges of our day are of this group: the doctrine of Progress, of Evolution, of materialism, of economic determination, even the skepticism which dogmatically denies Knowledge, infecting life with insistent goal-lessness: all procedures, indeed, whereby some specific aim or value or direction or process of life, intellectually conceived, or revelation or method of behavior, is set up as the Reason of existence. Seventh-day adventism, ethical culture, the Christian brotherhood of man, the communists' hereafter, in so far as they provide *the Truth,* are concoctions from a single pot of Knowledge.

Its ingredients can be decanted, as follows:

(1) Truth has an absolute existence, like that of a star or a book.

(2) Knowledge of the Truth can be possessed by the mind of man.

(3) Knowledge of the Truth is somehow independent of the knower who must "manage" to get it.

(4) Knowledge of the Truth transcends the knower; yet he can discover it, and then contain it.

The Truth, then, is an objective entity of which you, by the right method, can catch hold. The method may be baptism in a particular font, or fasting, or Yoga, or higher mathematics . . . no matter: the Truth is lodged somewhere, like the golden apple; and you must reach it, and clamber up to it, by a particular technique.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although still practically universal, it is important to note that this attitude toward Knowledge shows signs of dissolution. A thousand years ago, one Dogma covered Europe (having devoured or destroyed its innumerable brothers). Now, that vast body of Truth has broken up; the offices of homuncular cults fill skyscrapers in Los Angeles. Christianity and Buddhism have become as towers of Babel. The grandiose Way, once lighted by flaring semaphores, is now a path so devious and minute that every man must go equipped with chart and lantern, in order to be sure not to get lost in the wrong path of his neighbor.

The reason for this decay of the primordial, classic family of Knowledge is, of course, that the science of thought has undermined it. Knowledge of this kind is intellectual and absolute. It is *learned* by the mind; it is *known* in inalterable reclusion from life's shifting currents. This was passable in a world where intellect was an un-self-challenged fetish; where the Absolute was simple and static; and where God was immobile either as a person or an abstraction.[1] Since Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, since Newton and Einstein, this world has died. The intellect begins to know its place. The Absolute has been transfigured: even matter has melted to a flux. The immobility which was the first principle of life—the unmoved Mover of religion, the absolute Measure of science—is replaced by a universe of force in motion, whose immobility is an end (spiritual and physical) reached only in a diapason of motions. No wonder, since the ancient world has gone, that ancient Knowledge should be sick within it.

The truth is that dogmatic truth, however disguised in liberal, radical or agnostic mask, is doomed. Dogmatism implies a number of assumptions which need but to be brought into the light for every modern to reject them. To this end, however, the modern must be willing to submit to a few moments of somewhat dialectical thought. Dogmatic knowledge implies an immutable knowledge. And such immutability implies one of two alternatives, as follows:

(1) Knowledge of the Truth is independent of the knower. But this is absurd. Truth must apply to a reality either separate from, or related to, the knower. If the reality is separate from him, he has no relation with it, and can win from it no experience at all—much less a truth. Such a reality we can rule out, since we cannot conceive it. If not separate from man, reality is in relation with him. Any relation forms a kind of whole. The terms of a relation are not independent. Therefore the "truth" of a reality is not independent of the knower who is in and of it, as a part in a whole. There is no knowledge without the knower. There is no knowledge of truth in which the knower is not an integral part.

(2) Waiving this independence of knower from knowledge as absurd, the dogma of immutable knowledge of the truth is forced to the alternative implication, that the knower shares in the immutable form of his knowledge. This is to say that the knower is not a person. And this, too, is absurd. Man's personality is an essence of distinction. From this distinction, each person may deduce his community (not his identity) with other persons. If he knows the immutable truth, his distinction as a person enters in his knowledge; therefore his knowledge of the truth, in so far as it is his and part of him, is not of the one, immutable form implied by dogma. Creeds, scenting this difficulty, usually conclude that when a person knows the Truth, he ceases to be a person. Hence, the transcendentalism of all dogmas: the stressing of Heaven, of Tomorrow, of depersonalization, or of super-personalization, as the *locus* of Truth.

A community of true persons must mean a community of truths. This is a premise that obliterates dogmatic knowledge. But it does not lead to a vague relativism, to a flabby agnosticism which invariably hardens into the kind of knowledge it began by scouting. It leads to *a true world* in which man, as man, has his integral share. It leads to a basally different attitude toward knowledge.

Instead of being static, abstract, transcendental, knowledge becomes a part of behavior.[1] It is dynamic; it *is* action. And it is progressively "true" knowledge, "whole" knowledge, "holy" knowledge as it acts more in harmony with all thought and action. Its growth destroys all tendency toward dogma.

Even conceptual knowledge is a kind of action, since it is the work of the mind, abstracting and measuring experience. We who are thinking creatures cannot get along without it. But this sort of action is a factor, with other sorts, in the whole of our life. Our life is a factor in the sum of actions which is the Whole containing yet beyond us. Therefore, even as knowledge of all kinds is action, action of all kinds, if conscious, becomes knowledge.

This is the clue to the modern—to the American opportunity which we prepare to approach. The Whole of Europe was created and bound by static concepts, by intellectual, dogmatic "truths." When these gave way, energy flowed outward into actions which summed to chaos, since no consciousness of any sort contained them and since the old static concepts were unable to cover them at all. These actions, innumerable, self-assertive, chaotic, yet well tokened by the nature of the machine, are

[1] The medieval thinkers who made God an abstract essence, after Aristotle, were unconsciously giving him the same sort of existence as if he had been a person.

[1] Let no credit for this adhere to the Behaviorists. "The greater part of thinking," said Nietzsche, "must be counted among the instinctive functions." Spinoza's intellect is organic action. The Behaviorists deserve credit for attacking the dualistic attitude toward thought. But, in true American fashion, they proceed to make a dogma of their fragment of truth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the world we live in. As we grow conscious of them by means of a knowledge not alien to their nature, they will be transfigured into elements of our knowledge: they will constitute a whole within us, in lieu of a chaos around us.

The principle of human life is growth. Growth, too, is action. Growth is action whereby the individual comes more close to wholeness: which is to say, becomes within himself less of a contingent creature, and more nearly whole. Any action which is not in this sense an enlargement, we instinctively call the contrary of growth. Each life moves in the direction of the whole—or it shrinks, and it dies out. To act, then, in accord with the principle of growth is to partake of the experience of enlargement: to move closer to the experience of wholeness. *And this is the highest form of knowing.* Wholeness consists of actions. The wholeness of the atom is made up of actions of proton and electron. The wholeness of the molecule consists of the action of atoms. The wholeness of our universe is the synthesis of all the acts within it. To know, then, might be called an action of growth that is conscious of itself.

Since, in every knowledge, the knower is a factor, and the knower is a human life, our life is a part of any adequate knowledge. An intellectual truth within a lying life becomes a lie. Intellectual convictions, gleaned from cult or science, can be valid toward the making of truth, only if the truth-maker is valid. Self which acts enters the stuff of knowledge.

Even unconscious action might be called a kind of knowledge. The atom, the animal, the child, may be said to partake of life's knowing itself. But action, to be human knowledge, must be aware of itself. And for this, it must possess a technique and a method.

Modern science has been the preparation for this new type of knowledge. The ancient world, whose ghostliness is the breath of our universities, our churches and our politics, had no view of action as a value; and no method for attaining consciousness of action. How could Hindu or Gnostic become aware of the action of a star, of a molecule, of a person? Unable to cope with life in the quick of deed, they abstracted from it an immobile principle which they called truth. They made a virtue of their incapacity. The Hindu yearned for the Inert, calling all motion Maya. The Hebrew, in his stress of ethical action as creative Wisdom, was the most prophetic and most modern of the ancients, but he lacked sure hold upon his marvelous intuition, and often backslided from the splendor of the Prophets into a conceptual "Knowledge" imprisoned in Torah, Talmud or Kabala, and no better than the "Knowledge" of the Christian. The more modest Greek gave us the method: the method of modern science. Earlier science had looked at the motions of Nature (including those of mind and body) from a fixed intellectual standpoint. Modern science strives to look at the motions in themselves. It gives value to action, as the potential carrier of truth. And, in its results, it gives order to action. Actions of star, of man, of molecule, being ordered, are brought within the consciousness and wholeness of man. Man acts, in order to live and think. Now, he may begin to act consciously, in order to know.

Let the intellectual learn from woman. Suppose he went into her kitchen, and proved to her the unreality of her pots and pans: analyzed away into a vapor of contradictions their spatiality, their substance. She would laugh at him. For she has never taken her pots and pans as independent entities at all! She uses them; the real is the relation between them and her. With herself, they are part of an event that gives a dinner to idealist and realist alike.

Our conceptual truths are pots and pans. They are true in a true action. They are themselves a kind of action, which we must *know* by putting them into relation with all other actions. In other words, the dualism underlying all previous ideas about knowledge and action must go. They make for the defeat of Wholeness: for the defeat of health.

The world is at this Crisis—and it wants the Truth. Europe's intellectual and spiritual body breaks: man grows frantic, needing the Truth to heal him. How he goes about it will decide whether he moves forward to a birth, or back into a dim revival of what has died within him. The form of Mr. Munson's question reveals the danger.

It is so easy to believe that Truth is a ghostly golden apple, to be "discovered" somewhere. In that fond hope, men climb, men fight, men willingly die. What is hard is to know that truth is the conscious making of thought and deed into a whole that grows by actions ever closer to the Whole beyond it. Truth is a body—constantly reborn. And at the moment of birth, death is always near.

WALDO FRANK.

Philosophy

This is the winter time for God. We know
His summer days will dawn when man is dead.
Then will He walk with myrtle round His head.
The rose will climb where man is climbing now,
The thrush will sing to Him from every bough.
Free from the mansioned house, the hermit's bed,
He'll range the primrose paths of old, instead
Of sitting in, with thorns upon His brow.

In winter, how the winds of theory blow
The words about the flue to wet the fire
And pelt the view more steadfastly than snow;
While man, the cricket that will never tire,
Huddles behind the settle with his riddle,
Sawing forever on a tinny fiddle.

ROBERT MCBLAIR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vanzetti's Last Statement[1]

Monday, August 22, 1927

SACCO and Vanzetti were in the Death House in the State Prison at Charlestown. They fully understood that they were to die immediately after midnight. Mr. Ehrmann and I, having on their behalf exhausted every legal remedy which seemed to us available, had retired from the active conduct of the case, holding ourselves in readiness, however, to help their new counsel in any way we could.

I was in New Hampshire, where a message reached me from Vanzetti that he wanted to see me once more before he died. I immediately started for Boston with my son, reached the prison in the late afternoon or early evening, and was at once taken by the Warden to Vanzetti. He was in one of the three cells in a narrow room opening immediately to the chair. In the cell nearest the chair was Madeiros, in the middle one Sacco, and in the third I found Vanzetti. There was a small table in his cell, and when I entered the room he seemed to be writing. The iron bars on the front of the cell were so arranged as to leave at one place a wider space, through which what he needed could be handed to him. Vanzetti seemed to be expecting me; and when I entered he rose from his table, and with his characteristic smile reached through the space between the bars and grasped me warmly by the hand. It was intimated to me that I might sit in a chair in front of the cell, but not nearer the bars than a straight mark painted on the floor. This I did.

I had heard that the Governor had said that, if Vanzetti would release his counsel in the Bridgewater case from their obligation not to disclose what he had said to them, the public would be satisfied that he was guilty of that crime, and also of the South Braintree crime. I therefore began the interview by asking one of the two prison guards who sat at the other end of the room, about fifteen feet from where we were, to come to the front of the cell and listen to the questions I was about to ask Vanzetti and to his replies. I then asked Vanzetti if he had at any time said anything to Messrs. Vahey or Graham which would warrant the inference that he was guilty of either crime. With great emphasis and obvious sincerity he answered no. He then said, what he had often said to me before, that Messrs. Vahey and Graham were not his personal choice, but became his lawyers at the urgent request of friends, who raised the money to pay them. He then told me certain things abut their relations to him and about their conduct of the Bridgewater case, and what he had in fact told them. This on the next day I recorded, but will not here repeat.

I asked Vanzetti whether he would authorize me to waive on his behalf his privilege so far as Vahey and Graham were concerned. He readily assented to this, but imposed the condition that they should make whatever statement they saw fit to make in the presence of myself or some other friend, giving his reasons for this condition, which I also recorded.

The guard then returned to his former seat and my conversation with Vanzetti continued.

I told Vanzetti that although my belief in his innocence had all the time been strengthened, both by my study of the evidence and by my increasing knowledge of his personality, yet there was a chance, however remote, that I might be mistaken; and that I thought he ought for my sake, in this closing hour of his life when nothing could save him, to give me his most solemn reassurance, both with respect to himself and with respect to Sacco. Vanzetti then told me quietly and calmly, and with a sincerity which I could not doubt, that I need have no anxiety about this matter; that both he and Sacco were absolutely innocent of the South Braintree crime, and that he (Vanzetti) was equally innocent of the Bridgewater crime; that while, looking back, he now realized more clearly than he ever had the grounds of the suspicion against him and Sacco, he felt that no allowance had been made for his ignorance of American points of view and habits of thought, or for his fear as a radical and almost as an outlaw, and that in reality he was convicted on evidence which would not have convicted him had he not been an anarchist, so that he was in a very real sense dying for his cause. He said it was a cause for which he was prepared to die. He said it was the cause of the upward progress of humanity, and the elimination of force from the world. He spoke with calmness, knowledge, and deep feeling. He said he was grateful to me for what I had done for him. He asked to be remembered to my wife and son. He spoke with emotion of his sister and of his family. He asked me to do what I could to clear his name, using the words "clear my name."

I asked him if he thought it would do any good for me or any friend to see Boda. He said he thought it would. He said he did not know Boda very well, but believed him to be an honest man, and thought that possibly he might be able to give some evidence which would help to prove the innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti.

I then told Vanzetti that I hoped he would issue a public statement advising his friends against re-

[1] Reprinted from the February issue of the Atlantic Monthly, by the courtesy of its management.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taliating by violence and reprisal. I told him that, as I read history, the truth had little chance of prevailing when violence was followed by counter-violence. I said that, as he well knew, I could not subscribe to his views or to his philosophy of life; but that, on the other hand, I could not but respect any man who consistently lived up to altruistic principles, and was willing to give his life for them. I said that if I were mistaken, and if his views were true, nothing could retard their acceptance by the world more than the hate and fear that would be stirred up by violent reprisal. Vanzetti replied that, as I must well know, he desired no personal revenge for the cruelties inflicted upon him; but he said that, as he read history, every great cause for the benefit of humanity had had to fight for its existence against entrenched power and wrong, and that for this reason he could not give his friends such sweeping advice as I had urged. He added that in such struggles he was strongly opposed to any injury to women and children. He asked me to remember the cruelty of seven years of imprisonment, with alternating hopes and fears. He reminded me of the remarks attributed to Judge Thayer by certain witnesses, especially by Professor Richardson, and asked me what state of mind I thought such remarks indicated. He asked me how any candid man could believe that a judge capable of referring to men accused before him as "anarchistic bastards" could be impartial, and whether I thought that such refinement of cruelty as had been practised upon him and upon Sacco ought to go unpunished.

I replied that he well knew my own opinion of these matters, but that his arguments seemed to me not to meet the point I had raised, which was whether he did not prefer the prevalence of his opinions to the infliction of punishment upon persons, however richly he might think they deserved it. This led to a pause in the conversation.

Without directly replying to my question, Vanzetti then began to speak of the origin, early struggles, and progress of other great movements for human betterment. He said that all great altruistic movements originated in the brain of some man of genius, but later became misunderstood and perverted, both by popular ignorance and by sinister self-interest. He said that all great movements which struck at conservative standards, received opinions, established institutions, and human selfishness were at first met with violence and persecution. He referred to Socrates, Galileo, Giordano Bruno, and others whose names I do not now remember, some Italian and some Russian. He then referred to Christianity, and said that it began in simplicity and sincerity, which were met with persecution and oppression; but that it later passed quietly into ecclesiasticism and tyranny. I said that I did not think the progress of Christianity had been altogether checked by convention and ecclesiasticism, but that on the contrary it still made an appeal to thousands of simple people, and that the essence of the appeal was the supreme confidence shown by Jesus in the truth of His own views by forgiving, even when on the Cross, his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.

At this point, for the first and only time in the conversation, Vanzetti showed a feeling of personal resentment against his enemies. He spoke with eloquence and intense feeling of his sufferings, and asked me whether I thought it possible that he could forgive those who had persecuted and tortured him through seven years of inexpressible misery. I told him he knew how deeply I sympathized with him, and that I could not say that if I were in the same situation I should not have the same feeling; but I said that I had asked him to reflect upon the career of One infinitely superior to myself and to him, and upon a force infinitely greater than the force of hate and revenge. I said that in the long run the force to which the world would respond was the force of love and not of hate, and that I was suggesting to him to forgive his enemies, not for their sakes, but for his own peace of mind, and also because an example of such forgiveness would in the end be more powerful to win adherence to his cause or to a belief in his innocence than anything else that could be done.

At this point there was another pause in the conversation. I arose from my seat and we stood gazing at each other for a minute or two in silence. Vanzetti finally said that he would think of what I had said.[1]

I then made a reference to the possibility of personal immortality, and said that, although I thought I understood the difficulties of a belief in immortality, yet I felt sure that if there was a personal immortality he might hope to share it. This remark he received in silence.

He then returned to his discussion of the evil of the present organization of society, saying that the essence of the wrong was the opportunity it afforded persons who were powerful because of ability or strategic economic position to oppress the simple-minded and idealistic among their fellow men, and that he feared that nothing but violent resistance could ever overcome the selfishness which was the basis of the present organization of society and made the few willing to perpetuate a system which enabled them to exploit the many.

I have given only the substance of this conversation, but I think I have covered every point that was talked about and have presented a true picture of the general tenor of Vanzetti's remarks. Throughout the conversation, with the few exceptions I have mentioned, the thought that was uppermost in his mind was the truth of the ideas in which he believed for the betterment of humanity, and the chance they

[1] It is credibly reported that when, a few hours later, Vanzetti was about to step into the chair, he paused, shook hands with the Warden and Deputy Warden and the guards, thanked them for their kindness to him, and, turning to the spectators, asked them to remember that he forgave some of his enemies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had of prevailing. I was impressed by the strength of Vanzetti's mind, and by the extent of his reading and knowledge. He did not talk like a fanatic. Although intensely convinced of the truth of his own views, he was still able to listen with calmness and with understanding to the expression of views with which he did not agree. In this closing scene the impression of him which had been gaining ground in my mind for three years was deepened and confirmed—that he was a man of powerful mind, of unselfish disposition, of seasoned character, and of devotion to high ideals. There was no sign of breaking down or of terror at approaching death. At parting he gave me a firm clasp of the hand and a steady glance, which revealed unmistakably the depth of his feeling and the firmness of his self-control.

I then turned to Sacco, who lay upon a cot bed in the adjoining cell and could easily have heard and undoubtedly did hear my conversation with Vanzetti. My conversation with Sacco was very brief. He rose from his cot, referred feelingly though in a general way to some points of disagreement between us in the past, said he hoped that our differences of opinion had not affected our personal relations, thanked me for what I had done for him, showed no sign of fear, shook hands with me firmly, and bade me goodbye. His manner also was one of absolute sincerity. It was magnanimous in him not to refer more specifically to our previous differences of opinion, because at the root of it all lay his conviction, often expressed to me, that all efforts on his behalf, either in court or with public authorities, would be useless, because no capitalistic society could afford to accord him justice. I had taken the contrary view; but at this last interview he did not suggest that the result seemed to justify his view and not mine.[2] W. G. T.

Washington Notes

HERBERT'S campaign is going so well that, if he has not been carried away by the enthusiasm of his followers and his own fond dreams, he ought to be worried. There seems to be—there really does seem to be—no formidable obstacle in the way of his seizure of the nomination. It is true that this is January, and June is a long way off, but here he is actually within seizure distance, and without the slightest help from either the august Andrew or the noble Calvin. Half of the Cabinet and most of the influential under-secretaries have lined up behind him in such an open and earnest way as to make him unquestionably the administration candidate, in spite of the Mellon-Coolidge hands-off attitude, and their very evident desire that there be no administration candidate.

The reason I say Herbert ought to be worried is not because things do not look bright for him, not because there are any low, dark, menacing clouds in the sky, not because he is now threatened by any close rival, but for an internal rather than an external reason. The fact is, he has too many generals, and therein lies a danger. Is it Hubert Work, or is it Walter Brown, or is it Bill Donovan, or is it George Akerson, or is it Ogden Mills, or is it George Moses who is in charge? I do believe things have reached a stage now where Herbert had better give some real thought to this matter. It will, of course, be rather difficult to pick out a commander-in-chief from the list of generals without offending one or more of those not chosen, but in the end it will have to be done, if bewilderment and futility are to be avoided when his campaign reaches its most critical stage.

However, I have no doubt that Herbert will act in this matter, at the right time, and that it is already occupying considerable space in that capacious mind of his. As the present situation and the way in which it has developed are reviewed, it rather shakes the conviction, heretofore almost universally held, that Herbert is the world's worst politician. As to that, all I have to say is that, while he may not have known any politics when he came into the Cabinet six years ago, he has learned a lot since. If he has made a single political mistake since last August, when from the Black Hills the cryptic words were spoken that opened the door of hope, it has not been visible to the casual observer. On the contrary, he has since the second Coolidge renunciation come into personal contact with many of the most parboiled politicians of the party, from every section of the country. He has been a success with them. Prior to that time he was, it is true, too painfully embarrassed to talk politics articulately. But he is not embarrassed now, and not only can he talk, but he does talk, in a way sufficiently practical and understanding to be eminently satisfactory to the exceedingly practical boys who have been dropping in to see him.

Two rumors running around Washington this week, for neither of which I am in a position to vouch, are interesting in connection with the Hoover campaign, the growth of which makes it naturally the matter of overwhelming interest in Republican circles. One of these is to the effect that the peerless William Morgan Butler talks in private of Hoover and the Hoover candidacy in such a way as to convey the impression that a little—a very little—pulling, pushing and persuasion would bring him right over into Hoover's lap. It is also said that the most persuasive thing that could happen, so far as Mr. Butler is concerned, would be an intimation from Herbert that, should he be nominated, he would like to have William Morgan continue as Chairman of the National Committee. When one recalls the talk put out in the interests of Mr. Butler so often, in the past four years, of his desire to retire to private life, and the great sacrifices of his personal comfort,

[2] I afterward talked with the prison guard to whom I have referred in this paper. He told me that after he returned to his seat he heard all that was said by Vanzetti and myself. The room was quiet and no other persons were talking. I showed the guard my complete notes of the interview, including what Vanzetti had told me about Messrs. Vahey and Graham. He read the notes carefully and said that they corresponded entirely with his memory except that I had omitted a remark made by Vanzetti about women and children. I then remembered the remark and added it to my memorandum.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleasure and interest entailed in holding on to the committee chairmanship at the request of his exalted White House friend, it is impossible to credit this rumor. Probably William Morgan would not stay if begged by Herbert. However, Herbert will not beg him, for a number of reasons. Obviously one is that it would very seriously wound the feelings of all the Hoover generals. Another is that hardly any other person in the world would ask William Morgan to run a campaign for him except Mr. Coolidge.

The other rumor has to do with George Moses, the blunt, bold and sometimes brazen statesman from New Hampshire. Senator Moses, it will be recalled, was not only the first Republican Senator to size up the Coolidge situation and express his belief that he would not run, but he was actually the first Republican politician in the country to come out for Hoover. This latter action, it is said, was dictated, not by an inherent love for Hoover, but by a desire on Mr. Moses' part to beat to it the present Governor of New Hampshire, who is an ardent and devoted Hoover man. As a matter of fact, it is now reported that Senator Moses is not at heart so hot for Hoover that he is above taking a dirty dig at him in, around and about the Senate. He it was who, some weeks ago, started calling him "'Erbert 'Oover," which could hardly be regarded as a particularly effective method of promotion. And other wise cracks from the Hon. Moses are being cited around here to show that he is not pulling on the traces any too hard for Herbert.

This interpretation of the cutting comments of the irreverent and irrepressible Moses, however, rather does him an injustice, I think. He can't help that sort of thing. It is not only more or less natural to him to be sardonic and caustic, but he has, through years of painstaking labor, built up and established with the newspaper boys, who in turn establish it with the public, a reputation for that sort of humor. Tell a man in print two or three times that he is witty and thereafter it is impossible for him to resist trying to be. It is that way with George. His endeavor these days is not to let it be forgotten that he has, as various correspondents from time to time have written, "a rapier-like wit." That is a terrible thing for a man to see in print about himself—particularly if he happens to be a Senator. He has to be more than human to resist the inclination to prove it true. That is, I think, the explanation of George's recent comments on the Hoover candidacy. He isn't anti-Hoover at all—he is just trying to live up to his reputation.

Shifting to the Democratic side, it is worth noting that, immediately following the harmony banquet of last week, the first real move from the South to head Smith off was inaugurated, and inaugurated too, so I am credibly informed, with the advice, consent and enthusiastic coöperation of the embittered Mr. McAdoo, whose lofty and peaceful attitude at the banquet was such an obvious strain, and so clearly foreign to his nature, feelings and desires. It is around Senator George of Georgia, I am now told, that the dry anti-Smith forces are preparing to rally. Evidently they have persuaded Mr. George to let himself be used as the stalking horse. The plan is so plainly futile as well as venomous, and is so clearly designed to take from the Democratic party even the hope held out by the Smith candidacy, that I am a little surprised at Senator George lending himself to it. He is really a man of parts, able, clean and conservative—quite the best of the Southern representatives. Further, he has always seemed to me too clear-headed not to see through the type that is engineering the movement and not to realize that there is no possibility of any credit for him as a result. I can account for it only on the ground that the local McAdoo leader in Georgia has made him see things that do not exist. The effort will not, I think, get very far. As to tying one-third of the convention up for a last-ditch battle back of Mr. George, that they believe it can be done is sufficient comment on the caliber of the originators of the movement.

Washington. T. R. B.

Quiet Browns

The Merchant of Venice. Broadhurst Theater, January 16, 1928.

MR. GEORGE ARLISS' Shylock is sensible, expert, dry in tone, very much cut down in emotional content and at times in the lines—an excellence that is represented in those accurate transitions that he makes from expression to expression, in that close, controlling use of the eyes, and in that unbroken completeness of his stage pictures; and a limitation that is very neatly summed up in a scene that Mr. Arliss has inserted, I mean the place where after Jessica's escape he makes Shylock come home and knock at the door, listen and knock again, and then, as the curtain descends, stand there in the realization of what has happened, saying nothing, letting his disaster come down on his bent head and blighted soul—a scene reserved, dumb, pantomimic as it is, so un-Shakespearean in its nature as to be almost startling. These two phases of his achievement will serve to show what Mr. Arliss' Shylock comes to. It is discreet, profoundly limited, always interesting, trim, dry, sincere, and blessed with more knowledge of the stage than of poetry.

This version of Shylock conveys the general quality of the whole production. There is a vast cutting of the play —the whole scene, so instinctively necessary to Portia's drama, of Aragon and the silver casket, for one example, is omitted. There is a drought of sensuous range and glamor, of poetic excess, of Renaissance elaboration and richness. There is plenty of good sense, expert contrivance and dignity of method. And this brown sobriety of procedure is curiously augmented by a decor that is different from any I remember to have seen in a Shakespeare production. Mr. Woodman Thompson has provided a permanent set with steps and three openings—after the school of Mr. Robert Edmond Jones but without his distinguished elegance—within which the changes in scene take place. The visual aspect of the whole is not Venetian at all, save for the street scenes, which are pleasantly mindful; the rest looks Florentine. Portia's Belmont looks rich, dark and rather grim, not unlike the Davazati walls; the Doge's justice chamber is low in tone, with the so-called Savonarola chairs to sit in, plus a sort of fifth-century Byzantine throne for the Doge himself, and murals

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the rear that suggest Pinturicchio with the bright color taken out; the costumes looked more like Ghirlandaio than anything else I could think of, despite what seemed to be the Venetian Fortuny fabrics in the badly made men's clothes. Miss Peggy Wood's Portia—intelligently undertaken, but needing a more sumptuous release and splendor in all respects—looked Florentine indeed, the lovely head with its pearl snood might have been set on her shoulders by Piero di Cosimo himself.

This procedure on the part of Mr. Ames, or Mr. Arliss or Mr. Thompson, seems very puzzling indeed. If we have in mind some historical scruples, something to do with the epoch of the original story that Shakespeare borrowed, then why not take the Venice contemporaneous with this Florence of Mr. Thompson's, why not work from Carpaccio and the two Bellinis, whose wide record of their time is so accessible?

That, however, is not to the point. "The Merchant of Venice," as Shakespeare wrote it, belongs to Shakespeare's epoch. If, then, you want to be historical in one sense, why not realize some of that rash and splendid excess of the England of that day? Read William Harrison's "Descriptions of Britaine and England," written ten years before this play, for the jewels, fashions, manners and furniture of the day, or Ben Jonson's allusions, modelled on Plautus, but stuffed with the items of his time. If you want the historical even more exactly, in epoch and in the full late Renaissance quality as well, there is the Venice of Titian and Veronese, to be had full tilt in their paintings, to be had in palaces all over Venice even yet, with all that glamor of color, tapestry, architectural design, light, gilding, crystal and glass. If the theatrical expense of all this seems too great, even in the fabrics themselves—such magnificence, for instance, as Mr. Belasco clothed his Venetian senators with—it can be said that the spirit at least of baroque splendor and excess is as cheaply suggested as the semi-Venetian, semi-Florentine sixteenth-century decor that Mr. Ames has afforded Shakespeare's comedy.

All this is only another phase of the reduction that Shakespeare must perpetually expect in our theater. The limitation behind it must be cultural. We confuse seriousness with solemnity, poetry with refinement, restraint with poverty of spirit, and so on and so on. The problem behind every revival of such a play as "The Merchant of Venice" is, of course, to recreate it, in our modern theatrical terms, in such a way that its essence comes alive for our modern audience. A large order any way you take it. And this particular play of Shakespeare's has always been a staggering affair for actors and producers. What with its mingling of lyric ornament, starlit night, formal splendor, brutality, greed, torture, injustice, romance and the rest, it leaves us somewhat overpowered. Everybody knows what leading actors, touched with the possibilities of Shylock, have done to the script, even down to cutting off the entire last act, as they did sometimes in the golden days of Booth and Daly, because of its detraction from the majesty of the drama and the stellar accessories of the leading role.

It ought to be plain that the thing to attempt, at least, is to give all the qualities in "The Merchant of Venice" their full sway, or as far as possible their full pressure in every kind. In that case, Shylock can be as intense, dark and tragic as the actor can make him, since the weight of his quality will contend with the glory of Portia's, her wit, poetry, grace, and eloquence of mind, and the two of them and what they feel and say will be set up in counterpoint with all the grotesque, romantic, declamatory, epigrammatic, brutal, lyric and homely remainder of the play, in its full range of characters, motives and incidents.

What also is needed is a revamping of the idea of reality that is brought to the production in all its elements. We must know, in the first place, that the whole of "The Merchant of Venice" is of one substance, one organic unity, in so far as it is a successful and living work of art. In this case, then, you do not make the actions more realistic and photographic than the words are nor the speeches closer to actuality than the scenes, the plot, the motives, the music, the events. In the casket scenes, for example, the story is at the same distance from reality as the speeches; the passion is the same distance from reality as the poetic style; the deeds that the characters enact have the same relation to the actual as the poetic images that their lips utter. Only in this way can any style arrive in the production. But to do one passage as fantastic or poetical and the next as actual, merely makes actual nature seem poverty-stricken and Shakespeare's art seem false. Only a culture by which the essential quality of the play as created in all its elements and parts is perceived, can remedy such limitations as "The Merchant of Venice" on our stage evinces.

In the absence of other advantages, we might make the opera serve our needs in this troublesome matter. There is the "Norma" lately given at the Metropolitan, with Miss Rosa Ponselle in the leading role.

On the one hand, the spirit of Wagner is hard to forget, and it had permeated too far into the production of Bellini's masterpiece. Miss Ponselle brought a fine voice to the role, dignity of gesture and nobility of intention. But, like the rest of the production, she got into the music a certain kind of dramatic truth that was not right for it; the result was that the music that Miss Ponselle had to sing seemed, in the absence of its due musical pattern and variety, somewhat monotonous as the opera went on; it lost some of its life by this veracity forced upon it and not its own, and this particular kind of dramatic veracity seemed to be struggling through music often much too empty to express it.

On the other hand, there is the example in "Norma" of mingled and contending elements, of freedom from actuality, of studied phrase, elaborate leisure, poetry and conscious form. What if Bassanio should know that, when he takes Portia's kiss, his action must share the same quality as those golden, ornate words he says; what if Portia in the trial scene took her mercy speech, in all its phrasal integration, its cadence, its setting in the surrounding elements, as she might take an aria? The discordances of "The Merchant of Venice" will always be hard for us because so much of it is so highly Elizabethan. But the way to any unification of them into a whole work of art is not through elimination and evasion, but through

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the fullest orchestration of the play, in all its qualities, that we can achieve. Universal human feeling is doubtless the first basis of Shakespeare's universal greatness, and the first avenue by which we can know him, but it will not get us very far with "The Merchant of Venice" as a work of art.

STARK YOUNG.

The Company

AMERICA will never go Bolshevik.

It will not go Bolshevik for the same reason that a sculptor, after having created a masterpiece, will not destroy it with a large, malignant sledge-hammer. For he is proud of his work.

The American is an artist, too. What he has created is not a statue. It goes by the name of The Company, and, until one has heard an able-bodied trolley-car motorman speak of the interests of The Company, one has never heard an artist discuss the future of his works. It is The Company which America loves, and it is The Company which will keep its skirts forever free from the contaminating touch of the Bolshie. Too big to rule itself, just bubbling over with the desire to do something or to make something—the desire which besets every youngster about the middle of a summer afternoon—in its youth this nation went ahead and established The Company. True, there had been companies before. One remembers out of school-books the Hudson Bay, the Dutch East India, and others, redolent of the tea box and the spice chest. But never before had there been The Company. And nowadays it does not matter what the particular name of the organization may be; every American has somewhere in his life and in his heart the image of The Company. It may be the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the Bell Telephone Company, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, the Standard Oil Company—always it is The Company, the interests of The Company, and the future of The Company which beset his heart and harass his soul.

So it is that in this great nation of ours twenty-five million people (I do not like exact statistics) are employed by The Company, whatever its local nickname may be. They watch The Company grow. They see it climb from peak to peak, and enlarge from year to year. They sink their savings in the stock of The Company; they talk to their sons about the executives of The Company; they work their lives away in the service of The Company, and, when it is all over, they are happy in the thought of a funeral notice in the local house organ of The Company. Anything which threatens danger to The Company is regarded with unfriendly eyes, and the thought of the collapse of The Company is to them what the fall of their Temple was to the antique Jews. They have built a great thing, and they know it. Doctrines inimical to that great thing will never find a place in their minds.

We are different from other peoples, and our servitude is of a different order. The serfs, and, later, the peasants, of Russia were oppressed by an order which had been forced upon them. They rebelled against this order and destroyed it because they knew that in doing so they were destroying the work of others than themselves. But the American peasant has created his own lord, and molded out of his own mind his peculiar master. To destroy it would be to destroy what he himself has made—and I revert to my figure of the sculptor. Of course, he will not destroy The Company; let the damned furriners say what they please. The Company is good enough for him. It feeds him and gives him entertainment; its taxes, as it proudly claims, educate his children to be better than himself, and its exploits give plenty of work at a sensible wage to thousands of his kind. Destroy it! 'Twould be the removing of his right hand.

Literally his right hand, for consider how simple everything becomes, once the American peasant is identified with The Company. He does not have to go through the mental labor of planning a farm and organizing it, or conceiving a small store and getting it started. All he has to do is tighten the No. 10 bolt on the transmission, or signal for Train 548, or paste the labels on the two-gallon cans, or say that coffee is now forty-four cents the pound. Where the coffee or the transmission or the train or the can is going is no concern of his. Where any of these have come from is equally a matter of no importance. All he knows is that in the brief period in which the particular item is in his field of consciousness he must do some certain small thing to it; others will take care of the rest. There is no wear and tear on the mind, no destruction of nervous tissue. There is no responsibility—there is nothing, in short, to take the edge off the joy of living. And for his tiny service, endlessly repeated, The Company gives him his three meals, flivver, and radio. Does he love The Company? Will he hate the sneakin', radical agitators? He'll tell the cock-eyed world he will. And one may not dare to blame him. He is an artist hushed in reverence before the great thing he and his kind have built. He is an apostle in the service of a jealous but rewarding god. He is a member of a big outfit—and that is why he can go driving of a Sunday instead of going to church. For no man need serve two masters, and The Company is big enough to take up his weekdays and his Sundays too.

All of which clears up certain perplexities. Why is it that nine out of every ten men whom you may come upon in the street will know the advertising rates of The Saturday Evening Post, and will quote them to you, their voices taking on the accents of wonder as they reel off the thousands per page per issue which that great civilizer demands? Why is it, indeed, but that they recognize the thing as belonging to them in a peculiar way, as being part of the world which they and their kind have constructed? Their voices have the sound of proud ownership, just as if they were to receive the extravagant sums mentioned. For the same reason, when General Motors goes up some two thousand points on the market (I hate statistics) every man-jack of a flivver owner in these United States will explain the why and wherefore of it to you, and will boast about the growth of this corporation as if he owned 51 percent of the stock.

Occasionally someone throws a large and damaging monkey wrench into the well oiled machinery of The Company. The American is fair-minded at bottom, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may wonder for a time if the thrower is justified. But further than that he cannot go, for, after all, ownership implies a certain prejudice. He is so intensely a part of The Company that those who attack it attack him. And if the critic happens to be a foreigner—well, he must be pardoned for being annoyed. These people are openly against what he, the American, knows to be giving him his living. They are enemies of The Company. As a natural consequence they must never bathe, and it follows that they probably dislike baseball. And when the American scorns them, and rejects their counsels, the reaction is purely a temperamental one. He puts the toil-hardened thumb to the contemptuous nose, and proceeds on his way.

It all sounds like farce of the first order; written up by Voltaire in the eighteenth century, it would have been famous satire. But it exists—so much is incontrovertible. And this passion for The Company is as strong as the religion of the idol worshiper anywhere. It will last until a greater miracle comes along to displace it. The greater miracle may come in time; but the Average American takes no shame for believing that no miracle greater than The Company can ever exist. If it does come into being, The Company will probably buy the blamed thing; meanwhile, why worry? The Company is on the job, the constant stream of No. 10 bolts on the transmission is ready; if he tighten until five-thirty without quitting he will find a well earned meal awaiting him each night. So be it; and he closes his eyes to the rest of the world. There are those among him who have looked upon far shores and seen the beautiful, but they, too, whether they know it or not, are contaminated. They may not write great books nor paint great pictures nor compose great music, for their minds hold the haunting consciousness of The Company, and the blood which formed The Company is in their hearts. Their best course is to cease to make novels and to content themselves with serialized comic strips, to cease to write poetry and to make musical comedy lyrics, to cut out painting and to daub at The Company's billboards—and through it all to close the incoming mails, cut out all immigration, and ignore the rest of the world. We will never go Bolshie, anyway; if we do as I have suggested, we will never even feel that we have missed anything. And if the glow of artistic creation refuses to be stifled, if the urge to make something continues great and big and strong, why, then, we can . . . we can always start another company.

SAMUEL GRAFTON.

CORRESPONDENCE

"A Financial Path to Peace"

SIR: Mr. S. O. Levinson's article, "A Financial Path to Peace," has the high merit of simplicity. But, like highly simplified schemes, it is prone to overlook some disconcerting and inconsistent data. The proposal reads smoothly and convincingly until we reach its foundation upon Germany, who is to be the solid base upon which the structure shall stand. Pillar Two of the Levinson plan envisages Germany paying "adequate reparations" and the fixing of "German reparations . . . at a definite amount." The author then proceeds to fix the German debt at six billion dollars, which is to be turned into cash by a mammoth, international loan, paying 7 percent annual interest. In other words, Germany is to pay, under the plan, $420,000,000 per year to the United States. All other payments are suspended. All inter-Allied debts will be settled. When the full Dawes year is reached in 1930, Germany will have to pay $660,000,000 annually. Therefore, under Mr. Levinson's arrangement, she would be escaping with $140,000,000. Germany, presumably, would not complain.

But, since the scheme is an attempt to reconstruct the whole debt situation, Germany's interest in the matter should not be gilded over with a posited declaration that she must pay "adequate reparations." This is the old attitude of pre-Dawes days, when the illegal Himalayan obligations heaped upon Germany were reduced with the curt and unrelenting morality that, having been responsible for the misery of the world, she must pay. Since that time, we are generally agreed that she bears probably no more blame than any other major war participant, and less than many.

If, therefore, we accept the findings of investigators that the Reich was only equally guilty with her opponents, she cannot be burdened with mountainous sums and then coerced into paying to the limit, only to be chided and scolded for falling short of her "obligations." We must charge her only with just debts. These can only be the damages she caused by her ruthless invasion of Belgium and the consequent destruction that she was able to inflict upon northern France. To that may be added the sinking of ships. Though a balancing of England's illegal measures against her shipping should be undertaken, I shall here charge those losses to her reckoning. Keynes, in his "A Revision of the Treaty" on page 131, estimates the total for direct damages to amount to $7,500,000,000. While I have by no means complete figures in my possession, Germany has already paid, since the signature of the Treaty, at least $3,000,000,000. A more thorough investigation will undoubtedly reveal that she has turned over to the victors considerably more than that. But with these figures alone we find that the Reich would have only $4,500,000,000 left to pay, whereas Mr. Levinson would start her out with $6,000,000,000.

While the procedure as outlined on December 7 in the New Republic would certainly entail vast benefits to the world, and particularly the United States, it would seem equitable that the great advantages to accrue should not wrongfully rest upon one nation. Before such a plan be worked out, a thorough-going investigation of the whole reparation question in its relation to Germany's past payments, including transfer of territory and her just obligations, should be made. A list would have to be made of the destruction of arms, dismantling of fortresses, colonies surrendered, warships interned, *ad infinitum*. Before we can invoke the aid of a court of equity, we must ourselves have clean hands.

ELMER LUEHR.

Chicago, Illinois.

In Praise of Felix Ray

SIR: The article on politics by Felix Ray in your recent issue is a delight; it is intelligent, witty and apt. The sentence "When the G. O. P.'s went slumming and found Warren Gamaliel" merits immortality side by side with John Randolph's "Like a mackerel in the moonlight, it shines and——" Time will come when books will speak of the epoch "when Satan was President" after the epoch when the Archangel Gabriel blew his trumpet.

Probably a few years after the event a few politicians will awaken to the fact that in the winter of 1927-28 all the thinking women of America read a book and that an immortal book of ecstasy and agony—a book in the field of sex-psychology greater even than Rousseau's Confessions and as a revelation unique in the world's literature—has power in politics. No intimate friend of the man who betrayed everyone, his wife, his friends, his party, his women, and his country will ever arrive in the White House as tenant for four years. It is a question whether even the camouflage men—Hughes and Hoover—can make a winning while women vote. What they are asking is, "Well, why didn't he know about the man?" A book may be a power, for ideas construct, destroy and reconstruct the world.

WILLIAM E. CHANCELLOR.

Norwood, Ohio.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Criticism of Darwin

Darwin, by Gamaliel Bradford. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 315 pages. $3.50.

The Evolution of Charles Darwin, by George A. Dorsey, Ph. D. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company. 300 pages. $2.

Charles Darwin, by Leonard Huxley, LL.D. New York: Greenberg, Inc. 145 pages. $1.75.

Charles Darwin: The Man and His Warfare, by Henshaw Ward. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 472 pages. $5.

CHARLES DARWIN is a tempting subject for the biographer and the critic of ideas; but anyone who deals with the man must deal with his life and work together. On this score, Darwin's present biographers fall down. While Mr. Bradford has the best equipment for treating Darwin's character, he disclaims any competence to discuss his scientific researches or his philosophic views, and he thereby misses many interesting clues to Darwin's personality. Dr. Dorsey gives the fullest account of Darwin's life, but, like Professor Henshaw Ward, he has an eye on Fundamentalist superstitions, and he fails to explore the significant anomalies in Darwin's development. Mr. Leonard Huxley was an eye-witness of Darwin, the jolly lover of children; but his book is meager. As for Mr. Henshaw Ward, he concentrates upon the preliminaries of the fight for Darwinism. In his admiration of Darwin's astuteness in gathering supporters, Mr. Ward almost confirms Samuel Butler's suspicions about Darwin's disingenuousness: but Mr. Henry Festing Jones, Butler's loyal friend, has shown that these suspicions were not just.

What makes these books ephemeral and disappointing? Why do they offer so little by way of fact or interpretation that one cannot cull from the two-volume memoir by Darwin's son? The answer is, I believe, that the authors are all agreed to treat Darwin as a symbol and a figure; and they wish to defend him against the anti-scientific Struldbrugs; whereas the fun begins when one confesses that he is a man. How Darwin became a symbol, how the doctrine of Natural Selection was converted for a whole generation into the equivalent of Evolution, is one of the genuine problems in Darwin's life. Let us look into it a little.

Charles Darwin came of a family where evolution was an intellectual tradition. When he was a young man, before he went on the voyage of the "Beagle," he had read his grandfather's quaint poem on the subject; and he dismissed the notion as fanciful, just as he dismissed Lamarck's views, for the reason that, according to the sound empiricist tradition of Hume and Bentham and Mill, it lacked verifiable evidence: it was a poetic intuition. One pictures Darwin as a vigorous, tough-minded creature: he wants specimens: he wants facts; he has no more patience with overblown hypothetical structures than the eminent Mr. Gradgrind himself. So Darwin must have pictured himself, too, without realizing the great danger to which such hard-headedness is subject—namely, that it will take vast theories out of the air, and, contemptuous of the gnats it has spat out, will not recognize the camel it has swallowed.

The marvelous voyage of the "Beagle," which laid upon young Darwin the necessity of being geologist, botanist, zoölogist, and man of science generally, was perhaps the best preparation for his work that a naturalist ever received. When he came back to England, married Emma Wedgewood, his cousin, and settled into the countryside near the inaccessible little village of Down, he went through a course of discipline in exact observation and research that, in addition to a copious scientific correspondence, rounded out his abilities. During these years at Down, pursuing his researches on variation under domestic breeding, as a clue to variation in wild nature, Darwin came step by step under the sway of evolutionary ideas; and these ideas gave fresh point to his experiments.

Evolution itself was in the air. It had arisen as the notion of progress, among the eighteenth-century humanists, beginning with Vico; and the steady transformation of institutions, and the rapid multiplication of inventions and improvements in industrial machinery, had given body and backbone to the conception. While the traditional thinkers in the Church and the University still believed in 1850 in the notion of "special creation" and in the cosmogony of the Old Testament, slightly modified by Copernicus and Newton, there were scarcely any first-rate minds that thought confidently in these terms.

The growing acceptance of Evolution—the idea of continuous change and metamorphosis as a constant fact in life and society—did not rest upon any definite body of proof: instead of proof, there was an increasing sense of probability. It is likely that the patent transformation of society itself was the chief sanctioner of this belief: and it was inevitable that these currents of fresh air should have seeped into the scientist's study. Darwin thought of himself as a naturalist, and indeed he was a very great one: but Victorian economics played a large and uncontrolled, certainly unsuspected, part in coloring his views.

Up to 1858 Darwin's conduct as a scientist was exemplary. He had committed a sketch of his theory to paper in 1844; he had confided his views to a few close scientific friends like Hooker and Asa Gray; and he had set himself to gather the material for a vast two-volume work which would bring together every available bit of proof on the subject of "descent with modification." In 1858 all this excellent caution and care was suddenly thrown to the winds. A young specimen collector in Borneo, Alfred Russell Wallace, had sent him a paper on the origin of species: it contained the same statement of Natural Selection as the main agent of organic change that Darwin himself had labored for years to gather proof on. After a period of depression and misgivings, Darwin made up his mind: through his friend Hooker, he deposited Wallace's paper, along with a section of his 1844 sketch, and a letter to Asa Gray, with the Linnæan Society. Then he set to work hastily on an abridgement of his vast thesis for popular consumption: though he distrusted his concern for priority, he had no intention of letting young Wallace run away with his laurels.

One understand's Darwin's predicament; and one sympathizes with his moral dilemma; but one must not forget that he brought it on himself. The paradoxical point is that Darwin's claim to originality in his evolutionary doctrine rests upon that one aspect of the "Origin of Species" which was not scientific in origin, and to which he could make no honest claim to originality. Young Wallace had jumped to the elder naturalist's conclusions because he had chanced to read the same inspiring book: Malthus' "Essay on Population." To both scientists, Malthus came as a complete illumination. Both of them derived their doctrine of Natural Selection from Malthus' theory of a limited food supply, a multiplication of people in geometric ratio, and a struggle for existence in which the "fittest" (i. e., the upper classes) survived.

Darwinism is Malthus restated in terms of natural

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

history. But what is Malthus? Malthus' hypothesis was a reflection of the actual condition of eighteenth-century England, a condition produced by enclosures and new factory methods and wars, with a bitter struggle going on between the ousted hand-workers and peasants and the returning soldiers—this picture being reduced to an abstract view of human society at all times and places. Malthus' view was brilliant and suggestive; but it had no more been established by controlled observation than the wildest metaphysical guess of Oken and Swedenborg; and even had it been so, its application without further proof to biology was illegitimate in scientific method—an attempt to explain a simpler phenomenon in terms of one more complex. But in Darwin's honest empirical mind, this Malthusian theory worked like a swig of brandy in the head of one unused to liquor in any form: the theory was doubly potent because Darwin had the habit of rejecting facile conjectures. Natural Selection was not, for Darwin, merely a mechanism of elimination: it became a creative deity, guiding, forming, transforming every living organism.

Darwin's obscurity as a writer, in spite of his simple and straightforward style, has more than once been commented upon; it is due, I think, to the fact that his honesty as a naturalist compelled him to recognize facts like sexual selection and variation by jumps which were at odds with the hypothesis of Natural Selection; in the "Origin of Species" itself, without paying his acknowledgments to Lamarck, he uses, when he is driven to it, a purely Lamarckian explanation of atrophy and disuse—not troubling to explain why this should not work equally in a positive way. Darwin was genuinely confused about his relations with his forerunners, about the standing of Evolution as a general hypothesis, and about the character of his own proofs. He was modest in his specific statements, full of humility and doubt; yet at the same time he aimed at popular conviction when he published the "Origin." True: his sober judgments and his honesty, to say nothing of the magnanimity that an assured fame brings, caused him to correct his oversights in the first edition: he added a section on the earlier contributors to this doctrine. But one is conscious of a conflict. He wanted popularity and fame; and he got them; but when they came they rested, not on his solid and masterly observations as a naturalist, but upon his popularization of Malthusian economics. One might pass over this in silence, were it not for the fact that the Darwin-Malthus myth has played the devil in social apologetics: it has been used to defend almost every enormity from the partition of Africa to the Great War; for it gave the sanction of "science" to all sorts of perverse aims. That part of Darwin's work is the most dubious; and when one examines it carefully today, one doubts if it has survival value.

When one accepts Darwin's weaknesses, one is all the more conscious of his strength. A good part of his work has permanent value: he brought together vast unrelated tracts in zoölogy, geology, and botany: he founded the science of animal psychology: he brought to every biological problem keen habits of observation, a fertility in producing experimentally verifiable hypotheses, and a masterly grasp of detail. These qualities set him apart as a master-thinker. Darwin, the man, is one of the most lovable characters in the annals of the nineteenth century: when he is breeding pigeons or meeting with pigeon fanciers, when he is watching orchids or barnacles or experimenting, with the aid of a tender young lady, upon the emotions of an infant, he is like some great earth-god mingling with his own creations: his patience, his single-minded devotion, his tireless communion with nature, put him at the head of that great company of naturalists who have made man at home in a world so long foreign, and have increased the sympathy of human beings with the whole linkage of organic creation.

In all these aspects, Darwin is a venerable figure; he has lost nothing with the passage of time. But he was not merely a scientist: he was also a man: he had weaknesses and divided interests: he enjoyed applause: he made mistakes: and in the departments where he claimed most for himself one sees the influence of contemporary forces that had nothing to do with biological knowledge: one sees Malthus' rationalization of the survival of the bourgeoisie, one sees a theology of mechanistic chance replacing a Leibnitzian theology of providence, one sees a one-sided empirical philosophy attributing to external forces all the characteristics of any organic reaction and dismissing evidences of an inner—and therefore inaccessible—life as mere delusion. One sees these things clearly now, because one has escaped the social situation which made them so plausible, which made them the unconscious categories within which Darwin's great mind operated. Evolution anticipated Darwin; and it will survive Darwinism; but its success in doing the latter would be furthered a little if we realized that Darwin's work as a scientist requires no defense, whilst his work as a philosopher and organizing thinker is very often indefensible.

LEWIS MUMFORD.

The Finest Ram, Sir

Latest Contemporary Portraits, by Frank Harris. New York: The Macaulay Company. 362 pages. $2.50.

THE appearance of "Latest Contemporary Portraits," and of the third and fourth volumes of Frank Harris' "Life," demands that some comment should be made upon their author. However distasteful the prospect may be to Mr. Justice Levy and to Mr. Upton Sinclair, there can be little doubt that the erotic character of Mr. Frank Harris' autobiography will ensure for it a covert existence for many decades.

As a phenomenon of our time, and by no means an uninteresting one, Mr. Harris deserves serious consideration. In present-day literature he takes the place of old Flint in "Treasure Island," only he differs from Stevenson's creation by the fact that he himself is always present in the story. Never has there been such a rough-neck buccaneer! He certainly has more vitality than a dozen ordinary men of letters, and his deep-toned voice, the voice of a bell-wether *that is no wether,* will surely make itself heard, however much we may dislike it.

> Inky dinky Derbyshire,
> Inky dinky day,
> He was the finest ram, Sir,
> That ever fed on hay!

He is the master of many virtues that we cannot help admiring. He possesses remarkable physical and moral courage, and, above all, he is honest. When I make use of that word, I use it in no confined sense, but rather to indicate a sturdy spiritual quality such as no conventional shortcomings can injure. With regard to the dust-storm that the narration of his harlotries has caused, I am not one to share in the general concern. These tales reveal a singular school-boy naïveté.

The fact is, our pirate captain has the thickest skin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that could be imagined. His insensitiveness is an amazement; his obtuseness an astonishment. It is not so much his outspokenness that we have reason to deplore as his entire lack of literary tact and taste. And yet "in his innocence" he regards himself as a great writer. It was in no fit of caprice that he used to have his stories bound up with those of Balzac and of Guy De Maupassant. Essentially a man of action, he enters the world of letters with all the dense effrontery of such a person. Just as he has jostled and pushed his way through the everyday world, so he imagines he can jostle and push his way to a secure place in the realm of literature; and, indeed, I am often inclined to believe that there is an original audacity about Frank Harris, morality or no morality, literature or no literature, that may well ensure him his own kind of survival in human history.

Mr. Justice Levy finds that Harris' "Life" is "filthy, disgusting and utterly revolting"; Mr. Upton Sinclair that "it is the vilest book I have ever laid eyes on," while the New York Evening World declares "The Frank Harris of years ago died long ago, and it is his cadaver that has been writing recently, the odor proves it." To all this our author merely answers "sometimes as in the case of Shakespeare the recognition has to wait three hundred years. . . . Sooner or later we are judged by our peers and the judgment is unchangeable. I wait for my peers welcoming them. . . . 'His life is the fullest ever lived,' says my disciple, and they all stand shocked, for this is plainly the truth and they all realize that a supreme word has been spoken and that such a man is among the great forever." He esteems worldly success as highly as ever did Jesus the son of Sirach. He heartily endorses the words of Ambassador Bernstorff in his "Contemporary Portraits": "Success is the fruit and flower of human endeavor."

Yet the rarest gifts that life has to offer are not the obvious ones. Mr. Harris takes life at its face value. He knows nothing of its mystery, its poetry. He is as blind to its true significance as is any Wall Street company promoter. He is a successful journalist, "a hard-boiled" man of the world who has been taken in by the outward appearance of things; and the power that his astounding vitality gives to his writing is constantly being marred by the most tedious banalities. This his "masterpiece," in spite of "multitudinous revisions," is packed with examples of vulgar and careless writing.

Like all self-made men, he suffers from "an inferiority complex" which causes him to assert and to reassert his claim to distinction. "If I wanted more intelligence than could be found amongst my wife's friends I could easily invite Oscar Wilde, or Matthew Arnold, or Browning. . . . My table manners too were English of the best." Almost all his anecdotes are given a turn in the Frank Harris direction. One day Mr. George Moore is reported to have picked up a story by Mr. Harris which he found on his table. "I might have done it myself. Who is the writer? Whoever he is, he ought to be proud of himself. 'I wrote 'em all, Moore,' I said." What revealing glimpses he gives us of his unimaginative and uninspired days! "I had an excellent house and troops of friends. I had brought living to a science. I rode every morning in the park, ate and drank, in moderation . . . the motor car enriched life like the discovery of two or three new poets."

Yet in spite of so much that is obviously unworthy, in spite of the fact that in writing of Our Lord he can refer to him as the greatest man "who ever wore flesh"; in spite, I say, of such indifference to what is known as style, these books reveal a man of strong moral sense. There has been altogether too much coil made over his lack of reticence with regard to his amorous experiences. If these volumes were written to turn an honest penny, it does not matter. Money is every day made in far worse ways. As men of letters grow old, they, as well as others, must do what they can to get "their bellies to a table, and their backs to a fire."

Nobody could read his books without realizing that Frank Harris is a deeply religious man and one capable of passionate enthusiasm in the cause of right. When he does homage to Christ or to Shakespeare or to Goethe in words tremulous with an intense personal devotion, there is nothing false about it. He has been all his life the unfaltering enemy of every form of hypocrisy and oppression. His references to Professor Smith of Kansas are touching in their expression of youthful loyalty. And how admirable is his hatred of social oppressions, of cruelty, of war! "Cruelty to man or beast, to rat or snake, seems to me the unforgivable sin." "War the shame and horror of it ate into my very heart . . . I don't know how to express what I felt about that inexcusable war and my detestation of the men who brought it about."

If one reads Frank Harris carefully, one is rewarded by coming upon many sagacious observations such as might have been uttered by a shrewd, good-natured, law-abiding club-man.

> Nor have I any quarrel with any man's egotism. I expect it and reckon with it just as certainly as I reckon on the fact that his body casts a shadow.
>
> Vice! there are only vicious people.
>
> A hundred organs are given to men for pain, and only one for pleasure.

LLEWELYN POWYS.

An Ex-Colored Man

The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, by James Weldon Johnson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 211 pages. $3.

ALTHOUGH this remarkable revelation of the conditions which a Negro must face in America was written before Harlem existed, it furnishes indirectly an explanation of why a miniature city, with a culture and life of its own, has sprung up beyond the Park. First published anonymously in 1912, the "Autobiography" is a dispassionate statement of the educated Negro's viewpoint. The passing of fifteen years has merely enhanced its value as an interpretation of the Negro problem.

The story, which is probably not wholly autobiographical, introduces one first to a handsome, intelligent little boy in a New England town who learns of his Negro blood through the callous stupidity of a school teacher. That cruel enlightenment altered the universe for him, and precipitated him into his subsequent adventures in the intolerant South, in the Negro gambling dens of New York, and eventually in Europe. There were few phases of Negro life which this young man did not experience, and as the injustice and bitterness of anti-Negro feeling became clear to him, he finally decided to take advantage of his white skin, to desert his race, and to "pass." Without employing either rhetoric or rancor, Mr. Johnson ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poses the shameful prejudices which made this "passing" advisable.

Despite the importance of the "Autobiography" as a human and sociological document, its value as a piece of literature is not equally great. In this book, though not in some of his other writings, Mr. Johnson lacks the power to convince one emotionally of the stark, hard truth of the scenes which he presents. He fumbles his climaxes, even when the material offers him superb opportunities. Moreover, he does not distinguish with sufficient clearness between the trivial and the supremely relevant. One could spare much of the long account of the hero's youth, but of the psychological reactions which accompany the phenomenon of "passing" one is told only too little. The "Autobiography" is an excellent, honest piece of work. One wishes that it were even better.

E. H. W.

Humbert Wolfe

Kensington Gardens, by Humbert Wolfe. New York: George H. Doran Company. 81 pages. $1.50.

Requiem, by Humbert Wolfe. New York: George H. Doran Company. 125 pages. $1.50.

Lampoons, by Humbert Wolfe. New York: George H. Doran Company. 109 pages. $1.50.

News of the Devil, by Humbert Wolfe. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 39 pages. $1.50.

THE poems of Rupert Brooke are now as much neglected as they once were overpraised. Another writer, however, who admires his work and shares many of his qualities, has become immensely popular in England. Like Brooke, Mr. Humbert Wolfe writes graceful lyrics which do not lack conviction. Like Brooke, he is an accomplished satirist. Unlike Brooke, and unlike Heine, whom he also slightly resembles, he is unable to unite his two dissimilar talents.

He is even more facile than Brooke; indeed, he has that rare degree of facility which enables him to draw the plans for a volume, to erect the framework, and then to write the poems which will serve as shingles, sash, and clapboarding. Thus his books—of which four have recently been published in this country—are really books of verse, and not mere anthologies of poems by the same author.

"Kensington Gardens" is a series of brief lyrics dealing with the flowers, trees, birds, animals, and people to be encountered "some early morning, at Kensington, when spring is in the gardens." "Lampoons" is a volume of brief, witty, and virulent epitaphs. "Requiem," which is his most ambitious work, consists of dramatic monologues by the Common Man, the Respectable Woman, the Soldier, the Harlot, and other lay figures. Another ambitious work, "News of the Devil," is the satirical portrait of a journalist who attempted to promote a universal merger of religions. Two of these books are satires, one short and one long. Two of them are lyrical works, one short and one long.

As a lyricist, Mr. Wolfe is engaging, but inconsiderable. His ear is good; his rhymes, though sometimes strained, are usually unexpected; his ideas are almost invariably commonplace. It is true that one should not expect to find original ideas in a lyric poem; but one is justified in demanding an original vision, expressed in personal images. Mr. Wolfe makes too much use of "Paradise Lost," "Le Mort d'Arthur," the New Testament, and "The Age of Fable." He speaks of Broceliande, naiads, Pan the goat-boy, Lucifer, Magdalene, Ganymede, Martha, Euterpe, and a host of similar abstractions. His metaphors, too often, are neither seen nor imagined; they are remembered from his reading.

This is not the case, however, in his satirical poems. Here the atmosphere is scoured by the winds of anger, so refreshing after the damnable sultry politeness of contemporary English verse. Sharp images, falling like sleet, leave their scars on the brain. Curiously enough, it is in these satires, and not in his formal overtures toward Beauty, that Mr. Wolfe writes most poetically (which is to say, most personally); and when, in his customary invocation, he offers Euterpe "this bitter wreath of mine," we can be sure that his garland will not be unpleasing to the Muse.

MALCOLM COWLEY.

Recent Fiction

Declaration of Love, by Geoffrey Dennis. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $2.50.

THESE letters of Yorick in search of a wife, and the replies to them, record a colloquy strange to the point of abnormality. Ruthless and exhaustive analysis of motives on the part of a suitor may convince one of his emotional integrity, but augur ill for connubial peace—particularly when the results of such soul-searchings are expressed in terms of studied affront. The recipient of the voluminous (and questionable!) Declaration of Friendship, which opens the series, replies by an Assurance of Devotion that reveals her as the ideal wife for any introvert—possessed of inexhaustible sympathy, humor, understanding, patience, generosity and tact, and Proposal of Marriage follows almost as a reflex from the nervous center of the situation. The final Declaration of Love comes from the prospective bride and carries conviction of the ultimate comfort of the patient. The infrequent male who will plow through the correspondence will be moved to wistfulness by the vision of qualities which we fear will only exasperate the female reader—like the paragon held up by parents for emulation in childhood. We always knew what they wanted!

The Wayward Man, by St. John Ervine. New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50.

LOVE and war are the themes of St. John Ervine's latest book—the passion for the sea that drew Robert Dunwoody, favorite son of a domineering mother, away from shopkeeping in Belfast to follow "its excellent loneliness"—and the irrepressible conflict between shop and ship that split his life into portions of joyous hardship and of industrious emptiness. His adventure is slow to get under way. There are false starts and dreary returns to the treadmill of boyhood surroundings—but every thrust towards freedom carries further, and the final surge lifts him almost passive toward the sea he has so desired. The passages that follow rank with the great literature of the sea. The rounding of the Horn is described like a battle—a fierce and ceaseless struggle with malevolent Nature, and the protracted uncertainty of life which reduces all but the continuance of existence to insignificance, and explains the sailor's simplicity ashore as the result of alteration in values felt by a veteran of wars. Robert's adventures in port are straightforward and inevitable drama—all in the night's play—but the subsequent horrors of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

return voyage reduce him to submission, to security, the family and the shop. Held fast by commercial drudgery and a ready-made wife until the backwash from a single casual encounter flings him upon domestic disaster and then out to sea again, Robert seems less The Wayward Man than a captive creature of the sea—drawn out by a tide, cast back on stony shore and again swept out to liberation from the sad securities of land. The power of the story and the romance within it are the power of the sea and the romance of the ship, and for the Wayward Man there was none beside.

Lady, What of Life? by Lesley Storm. New York: Harper and Brothers. $2.

WITH surprising sureness of hand, this new English novelist sets her emotional scenery and moves her players within it. Introduced before the chaotic background of a completely haphazard upbringing, the three nieces and wards of the narrator range themselves in the reader's interest according to his sympathy with their respective types. These are, perhaps, too sharply defined for realism, but serve the better to accent the situation, which rises from the emotional greed and cunning of one sister as opposed to a pursuit of happiness not wholly ungenerous on the part of the other. The tragic role falls naturally enough to this latter, Virginia—unarmed as she is with any plan of life—falling into love, falling into relinquishment, falling into desperate, fatal distractions, loveless marriage, and finally into flight. Even death comes in the crash of the plane in which she and her lover are escaping from the wreckage of their homes—and which one cannot but feel saves both lover and author from the predicaments emotional and literary that in our day except the rule: they lived happily ever after.

The Lonesome Road, by Lucy Furman. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $2.

AGAIN Mrs. Furman writes of Kentucky mountain life, with the intimate understanding that has already made her the interpreter of a people. Her assured apprehension of mountain philosophy and of the simple and exalted code of loyalty and obligation held by pastoral folk persuades the reader that a more complex civilization would have nothing but material advantage to offer these people. The crudity of their religious concepts is illustrated by the cruelty—as unconscious as it is unnatural—with which these are carried into execution, but the contradiction between savage theory and actual good will toward men which so obviously prevails among these gentle folk provokes the city-dweller to reflection upon inconsistencies in "higher" culture. This stimulus to comparison of modes of thought and codes of conduct is more potent than the narrative itself—although dramatic situations are presented and the story follows a coherent and progressive course. But the drama, although occasionally gripping, is less Mrs. Furman's subject than it is a cursive illustration of her folk-knowledge, of which this book is a graphic and agreeable exposition.

Splendor, by Ben Ames Williams. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $2.50.

SOME degree of interpretative imagination is necessary to explain the apparent irrelevance of Mr. Williams' title to his subject—which is the career of a well meaning, innocent plodder in "the newspaper business," the sort of pleasant, wistful little man that Clare Briggs endears to us in "Mr. and Mrs." The chronicle extends from childhood in the seventies to late middle-age in the present day, and records an amazing number of the changes—social, mechanical and journalistic—that took place during that Protean period. The development of journalism is the background—almost the condition—of Henry Beeker's life, and his ambitions, fulfillments and frustrations, even to some extent his personal joys and sorrows, follow its shifting patterns. But at the center of all the change stands the commonplace little soul—unshakably honest and kindly, burdened with irksome responsibilities, harassed by anxieties, wholly unconscious of heroism in his steadfast and matter-of-course unselfishness. The hum-drum sequences of his history become mere somber settings for the splendor of loyalty that is completely taken for granted in Henry Beeker's stratum of society—the widely-condemned bourgeoisie. Mr. Williams succeeds in conveying to the reader his own evident belief that self-forgetful devotion is one of "the things we see every day," and in transfiguring an everyday story by its demonstration.

The Place Called Dagon, by Herbert S. Gorman. New York: George H. Doran Company. $2.50.

HERBERT GORMAN, if any contemporary, has power to reinvoke the somber terrors of New England witchcraft. Familiarity with the sources of Hawthorne's inspiration has intensified the interest of his subject, although no trace of Hawthorne's influence appears in his method. This is, in general, strikingly effective, although occasional over-stress of the horrific defeats its purpose. A slight but appealing romance winds through the dark byways of atavistic setting toward the culminating scene in the place called Dagon, and serves to heighten apprehension, though not to any alarming degree of suspense. Broken allusive dialogue and strongly suggestive description are skillfully used, and there are many passages of quick and virile beauty. The potency of narrative illusion sags in places, but there is consistent distinction in Mr. Gorman's writing and substantial pleasure for the reader in this example of his art.

D. B. WOOLSEY.

A Correction

The New Republic is glad to announce that "The Stabilization of the Mark," by Hjalmar Schacht, a review of which was published in the New Republic of January 25, has been published in the United States by the Adelphi Company at $3.

Contributors

LOUISE BOGAN is the author of a book of verse, "Body of This Death."

ROBERT MCBLAIR is the author of a novel, "Mr. Fish Kelly." His second novel, "Black Gold," will be published this spring.

W. G. T. (WILLIAM G. THOMPSON, of the law firm of Thompson, Spring and Mears) was counsel for Sacco and Vanzetti after their conviction and until the eve of their execution.

SAMUEL GRAFTON has written articles on sociological, literary and artistic subjects for various magazines.

LLEWELYN POWYS is the author of "Ebony and Ivory," "Black Laughter," and other books.

MALCOLM COWLEY has translated several books from the French, the most recent of which is Paul Valéry's "Variety."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Real Story Behind the Headlines!

Sacco-Vanzetti

The Red Raids of 1919

The Cordage Strike

Boston's Police Strike

Financial Feuds

Censorship

Upton Sinclair Tells It In "BOSTON"

BOSTON *A CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL NOVEL*

by UPTON SINCLAIR

begins in the February BOOKMAN. It brings to a climax his profound analysis of American life. In "Boston" the conflict in modern America between our traditional liberalism and the intolerances brought about by economic and industrial change is focused and dramatized. "Boston" is Sinclair's finest story; it is his answer to the suppression of his books; it is a revelation of extraordinary conditions in America's first cultural center and the cradle of our liberties —and it is a powerful, exciting novel, broad in its sweep and with real characters moving against a background of real events.

commencing in

The FEBRUARY BOOKMAN

Order the February issue in advance at your newsdealers' or mail your subscription* to The Bookman, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York.

(*$5.00 per year; $5.50 in Canada; $6.00 abroad)

BOOKS

THE BOOKS YOU *CAN'T GET* ELSEWHERE MAY BE *RENTED* FOR A NOMINAL FEE!

Members throughout the United States have access to a collection of rare, scarce, unusual, out-of-print and curious books chosen largely by themselves.

Limited editions, privately printed items, unexpurgated translations and exceptional reprints may be had through this entirely unique service.

You may now **read without buying**, at moderate cost, both the quaint old books and the extraordinary new ones.

Please state occupation or profession when writing for information and lists.

Esoterika Biblion, Inc., Dept. C2.
45 West 45th Street

EXTRAORDINARY OFFER

COMPLETE and unexpurgated translations of Foreign Masterpieces. Privately Printed and Illustrated Editions. Rousseau's Confessions, Boccacio's Decameron, Balzac's Droll Stories, the Heptameron, Rabelais, etc., $3.50 each. Catalogue upon request. American Book Collectors, 321 Broadway, New York.

THAT BOOK YOU WANT!

We hold 1,250,000 vols., second hand and new, every conceivable subject. Books on approval. Also Rare Books, Out-of-Print Books, and Sets of Authors. Catalogues free (20 issued). Outline requirements and interests, **FOYLES,**
121 Charing Cross Road, LONDON, England

WHAT IS THE SINGLE TAX?

Every liberal should know! A new book by Louis F. Post, former Assistant Secretary of Labor, gives a clear and comprehensive answer and throws light on the great economic problem.
Cloth bound, only 50c postage prepaid.
Henry George Foundation,
1306 Berger Bldg.,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

SCHOOLS

FRENCH SUMMER CAMP FOR GIRLS

July-August, Macdonough Point, Lake Champlain

A REAL summer camp with land and water sports, saddle horses, camping trips in the Green Mountains, arts and crafts, *plus* FRENCH. Conversation and vocabulary taught by use in camp activities by native French associates and French-speaking councillors. Write for information.

Edward D. Collins, Director ECOLE CHAMPLAIN, **Middlebury, Vt.**

POSITIONS WANTED

Educated, well informed young man, widely read, desiring to develop himself along a literary and journalistic career, seeks occupation as assistant to author or editor. Address: Box 537, The New Republic.

State executive, civic, political, international pioneering, wants to give up an excellent position for a better one.
Address, Box 538, The New Republic.

GENERAL

Will anyone possessed of letters, diaries, bills of lading, captain's log, or other material, giving light on the days of sailing ship trade between Philadelphia and China, please communicate with **Nora Waln, care of Provident Trust Co., 1508 Chestnut St., Philadelphia.**

LECTURES

THE PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE

Program Feb. 3—11
AT COOPER UNION

(8th Street and Astor Place, at 8 o'clock)
Admission Free.

Friday, Feb. 3—**Everett Dean Martin:** "The Poor Man's Country! From John Jacob Astor to Henry Ford."

Sunday, Feb. 5—Concert by the American Orchestral Society. **Chalmers Clifton,** Conductor.

Tuesday, Feb. 7—**Nels Anderson:** "Democracy in the Great City."

AT MUHLENBERG BRANCH LIBRARY

209 West 23rd St., at 8 o'clock.

Monday, Feb. 6—**Mark Van Doren:** "Chaucer."

Wednesday, Feb. 8—**Robert Chambers:** "Discovery of the Cell and the General Conception of Protoplasm."

Thursday, Feb. 9—**E. G. Spaulding:** "Does Genesis Determine Validity?" Wm. James.

Saturday, Feb. 11—**Horace M. Kallen:** "Why Fate and Freedom Are a Problem."

WHAT IS MODERN ART?

Business groups, artists and laymen, art directors and teachers, writers and craftsmen are members of the classes in pictorial analysis now in session under the direction of

RALPH M. PEARSON

A new group beginning Thursday evening, January 19th, will continue every Thursday thereafter for twelve weeks.

JEAN CHAMBLIN, Manager.
10 E. 53rd St., New York City.
'Phone Plaza 7168

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED